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Supermarkets review policy

Beef industry faces ruin as bans spread

BY CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

THE beef industry was staring ruin in the face last night as the world boycott of British meat and cattle spread and the European Commission declared the unilateral bans by nine EU countries legal.

As prices continued to plummet at cattle markets, the Consumers' Association gave the starkest warning yet to people to stop eating beef products, and supermarkets urgently reviewed their buying and labelling policies.

MPs alarmed by the fallout from the announcement on Wednesday that "mad cow" disease might have been responsible for fatal brain illnesses in humans set up an inquiry into the handling of the affair and summoned ministers and health experts to give evidence next week.

By then, the Government's scientific advisers should have reported on the vital question of whether it is safe for children to eat beef and the European Commission will have ruled on what measures, if any, should be taken by the

EU. Tough action, and possibly an outright ban, now seems almost inevitable in the face of the continent-wide panic that has led to most members of the Community closing their borders to British beef and cattle.

The Commission will make its decision on Monday after hearing advice from its veterinary committee, and yesterday a panel of independent experts were reviewing Britain's evidence.

On Thursday, officials had said that France and other EU nations were acting illegally by imposing bans without giving prior notice, but in a sharp change of tune yesterday the Commission said that it had been mistaken since the countries had been responding to a legitimate concern over public health. That view was backed by the Commission President, Jacques Santer, whose spokesman said: "It's much more than a legal question. This is a very important public health question which concerns us all."

The Commission insisted that it would not be rushed to action, saying: "We are obviously at the peak of the reaction, so there should be no rash decisions." But officials acknowledged that pressure for radical measures was so great that the Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler was virtually obliged to fall into line with the demands for at least a temporary ban.

Herr Fischler will have to weigh up delicate political factors in reaching his decision. He will have to consider not only the scientific advice and the Commission's credibility as the guardian of European well-being, but also take into account the need to save the Community's beef industry from "meltdown" and the danger of intensifying British hostility to Brussels.

"It's a hell of a painful problem," one Commission official said. "We are not going to get much sleep until this is over." Officials are working on the likely impact of a full-blown beef crisis, which could mean a return to the food mountains that caused such public anger in the 1980s. The EU is the world's second beef producer after the United States, accounting for nearly 15 per cent of world output, and a crash in prices followed by a glut could impose a huge drain on the Common Agriculture Policy because Brussels would be forced to buy excess supplies. Under the intervention rules, the farm authorities must buy up stocks if the price falls by about 20 per cent from its recent average — cattle prices were down by up to 28 per cent at some British markets yesterday.

Officials said it was unclear what intervention could be applied to suspected British beef since the practice is to buy in meat for storage and later use. Under existing rules, beef Continued on page 2, col 3

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Elizabeth Forsyth being led away from Chichester Rents yesterday after being convicted of handling nearly £400,000 in stolen funds

Nadir thwarted by aide's conviction

BY ROBERT MILLER
JON ASHWORTH
AND JOANNA PITMAN

ASHIL NADIR, the fugitive millionaire former head of Polly Peck International, had his hopes of a triumphant return to Britain from his home in northern Cyprus dashed yesterday when his former aide was convicted at London's central criminal court of handling nearly

£400,000 in stolen funds. Elizabeth Forsyth, 59, who oversaw Nadir's private business interests, had denied laundering money during a visit to Switzerland in 1989.

After a five-week trial it took the jury of seven women and five men 11 hours and 41 minutes to reach a 10-to-one guilty verdict on each of two counts of handling stolen money. Mrs Forsyth, who was legally aided, had returned

voluntarily from northern Cyprus in September 1994 to face Serious Fraud Office questions.

As the news of the conviction reached northern Cyprus, the Nadir camp fell into a controlled fury and began preparing to launch a series of appeals. Having promised to give a press conference whatever the verdict, Nadir refused to appear. Instead Peter Dimand, the British pilot who

flew Nadir out of Britain when he jumped bail in May 1993, told the press: "We'll appeal, we'll take it to Europe. We'll get them [the Serious Fraud Office] in the end, you'll see."

Mr Justice Tucker rejected an application for bail and ordered Mrs Forsyth to be remanded in custody for pre-sentence reports. She is likely to be sentenced on the two charges, which carry a maximum of 14 years, in three

to four weeks' time. The judge told her that she must "be under no illusion on the likely outcome of the sentence."

Mrs Forsyth embraced her 88-year-old mother, Margaret McAlpine, before being taken to Holloway prison in north London. As she left the court Mrs McAlpine said: "My daughter is strong and she will fight back."

Jet-setting bankrupt, page 4

Rhodesia farm gaffe puts Clarke in a stew

BY MICHAEL HARTNACK AND NICHOLAS WOOD

KENNETH CLARKE was at the centre of a Mad Chancellor scare yesterday after joking about the plight of farmers facing ruin in the wake of the BSE scare.

"The trouble is the farmers will want me to compensate them," Mr Clarke lamented loudly to Herbert Murerwa, Zimbabwe's acting Finance Minister, who was asking about the possibility of slaughtering all Britain's 12 million cattle.

The Chancellor was presumably reflecting that the likely £7 billion cost would wipe out all hope of pre-election tax cuts.

"When I was Minister of Health we managed to lose 150 people," continued a jovial Mr

Clarke, in an apparent reference to the death toll from listeria outbreaks and the salmonella-in-eggs affair.

Earlier in his ten-day African trade safari, Mr Clarke had raised Foreign Office eyebrows by shaking hands with a giant yellow condom in Soweto. Yesterday, the Chancellor perpetrated an even graver solecism by blithely referring to his host country by the taboo colonial name of Rhodesia.

After a 90-minute meeting with Robert Mugabe, Mr Clarke dug deeper into one of his famous holes, by siding with Zimbabwe's blacks against the Foreign Office in a long-running row over the transfer of economic power.

GP used patients as guinea-pigs

BY DOMINIC KENNEDY
SOCIAL AFFAIRS
CORRESPONDENT

A SENIOR general practitioner who used his patients for drugs trials without their consent was yesterday ordered to be struck off.

Geoffrey Fairhurst, 57, of Warrington, Cheshire, a member of a medical ethics committee and former justice of the peace and government adviser on health, was paid £15,000 to provide guinea-pigs

for the pharmaceutical industry. A committee of the General Medical Council found him guilty of serious professional misconduct involving four patients using potentially dangerous drugs.

Sir Donald Irvine, president of the council, told him: "Trust lies at the heart of the practice of medicine... Where doctors intend to involve patients in clinical trials, it is essential that they first give those patients a proper explanation... Your behaviour has not

only been dishonourable in itself, but has also placed the welfare of patients at risk."

Dr Fairhurst was reported by Dr David Edwards, his colleague at his practice in St Helens, Merseyside, who was subjected to a great deal of vitriol, the hearing was told. Sir Donald reminded all doctors of their duty to take action where they suspected colleagues of unprofessional conduct.

Dr Fairhurst was accused of forging the signatures of four

patients. He was paid various sums by Glaxo Pharmaceutical and other drugs companies between 1988 and 1995.

Nicola Davies, QC, for Dr Fairhurst, said the GMC could not prove forensically who had written the false signatures on consent forms.

She was not suggesting that the patients who gave evidence were lying, but it was significant that they had all been in ill health and on different medications for many years.

School reopens in Dunblane

The children of Dunblane returned to their primary school for the first time since the massacre of 16 pupils and their teacher ten days ago. The gym where the shootings took place has been sealed and boarded up.

Ron Taylor, the headmaster, greeted his pupils and then spoke to a pool of reporters and photographers. He said the evil that had come last week had gone... Pages 5, 23

Euro-sceptics form new body

Euro-sceptic Tory MPs have secretly formed an organisation to press for a tough line at the Turin intergovernmental conference on Europe, which starts next Friday.

Bill Cash is chairing the new body — the IGC Monitoring Group Page 2

Ornithologist finds that his rare owl was bird in the pot

BY JOHN VINCENT

PHILIP HALL, a British ornithologist, was hot on the trail of one of the world's rarest owls. His hopes were high as he ventured into a village in Nigeria where the bird had been sighted.

But his excitement turned to horror when local people said they had killed the bird the previous night and eaten it

that morning. All that remained of the rufous fishing owl (*Scotopelia ussheri*) was its head, some feathers and a few bones in the cooking pot.

The story of the unfortunate owl, so rare that only about 30 sightings have ever been reported, comes in a faxed message to the African Bird Club in Britain. Mr Hall, who emigrated to Nigeria from Derby 24 years ago and works for a conservation group, said in

his fax that after catching a glimpse of the bird, which is about twice the size of a British tawny owl, in a forest glade near the River Niger in Edo State in 1995, he returned this year to try for another sighting.

He wrote: "Inquiries were made of local villagers to ascertain if they knew of the existence of the owl. It transpired immediately that not only were they familiar with the owl but one had been

killed the previous evening and cooked and eaten that very morning."

"Unfortunately, very little was left of the bird, apart from one of its yellow legs, the decomposing head which clearly showed the yellow cere on the bill, and several dark-barred rufous primary wing feathers."

The British Trust for Ornithology said yesterday: "This is the rarest of three species of fishing owls in Africa."



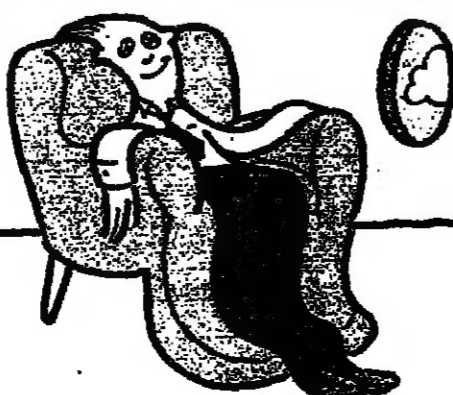
The rufous fishing owl

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AFTER HIS MASSAGE, CARL WAS ALMOST... TOO RELAXED.

THE TIMES
ON MONDAY

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Rob Hughes at Wembley for the Coca-Cola Cup final

Michael Henderson at Old Trafford for Man Utd. v Spurs

Tory Euro-sceptics gathering for assault

By NICHOLAS WOOD
CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

EURO-SCEPTIC Tory MPs are organising their forces for another assault on the Government's European policy. They have secretly formed a new organisation to press for a tough line at the intergovernmental conference (IGC) on the future of Europe, which starts next Friday in Turin.

Their move will be regarded with alarm by John Major and moderate Cabinet ministers, who suffered badly

at the hands of the sceptics during the Maastricht rebellion.

Bill Cash, one of the foremost opponents of the Government's European stance, is chairing the new body — the IGC Monitoring Group.

The group, which has held two meetings attended by about 40 Conservatives, is acting as an umbrella body, helping to co-ordinate sceptic attempts to stiffen Mr Major's backbone in the IGC bargaining.

Leading members of two other key factions — the 14-strong European Research Group and the Group of

Eight, made up of the former whipless Tory MPs — have amended the meetings. Norman Lamont, Sir Ivan Lawrence and John Townend, all members of the European Research Group, and Sir Teddy Taylor and Christopher Gill, formerly whipless, are among those who have been present. John Redwood, who challenged Mr Major in the summer, is also taking part.

The new group showed its teeth in Thursday night's debate on the Government's White Paper on Europe when its leading lights

queued up to reject Malcolm Rifkind's stonewalling approach to the IGC. They want the Prime Minister to rule out a single currency, claw back powers from Brussels and assert national sovereignty over the European Court of Justice.

It is understood that the group met shortly before the debate to plot tactics and arguments. Despite the sceptical tone of his White Paper and his Commons speech, the Foreign Secretary was mauled by many of his backbenchers. Sceptics said the presence of one-time pro-Europeans,

such as the former ministers Robert Key and Charles Wardle, at their gatherings was evidence of the anti-federalist groundswell building within the party.

Labour would storm home in the forthcoming Staffordshire South-East by-election, according to a survey in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* that shows the Conservatives would probably be forced into a battle for second place with the Liberal Democrats. At the last election the late Sir David Lighthorn won the seat with a 7,192 majority.

IRA dashes peace hopes
by rejecting election plan

By NICHOLAS WATT
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

The IRA dashed hopes of an imminent ceasefire yesterday when it rejected John Major's plans for elections in Northern Ireland as "unacceptable".

As the Irish National Liberation Army threatened a new campaign of violence in the wake of Mr Major's announcement, the IRA condemned the election proposals. Amid nationalist fury, a senior IRA source told BBC Radio Ulster that the plan did not have the "dynamic needed to carry all parties to meaningful peace negotiations free from all conditions".

Republicans believe that the Government and Unionists want to use elections to delay the start of all-party negotiations in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin, which described Mr Major's plan as "anathema to nationalists", said yesterday that it had lessened the chances of an IRA ceasefire.

Mitchel McLaughlin, Sinn Féin's chairman, who was speaking before the comments by the IRA source, said: "I believe that, in these circumstances, the arguments that would be necessary to convince the IRA leadership do not emerge. They are not present."

Gerry Adams will spell out Sinn Féin's objections at his party's annual conference in Dublin tonight. However, Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, yesterday dismissed them. Also speaking on BBC Radio Ul-



Members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party announcing the INLA's decision

ster, Sir Patrick said: "I can see no reason why a party which claims to be democratic should wish to be deterred by elections... which are a gateway through to the negotiations that they say they wanted to take part in for so long."

Sir Patrick also struck an upbeat note when he said that nobody is saying as yet that they're not going to take part in the elections.

"Of course people in Northern Ireland want their politicians to sit down and negotiate," However, the

INLA provided a stark reminder yesterday of the terrorist threat in Northern Ireland when it announced that it had placed its "units" on stand-by.

The terrorists said they would act "from a position of defence and retaliation". This was seen as a threat to the security forces and to loyalist paramilitaries if they break their ceasefire.

The republican terrorists, who have observed a de facto ceasefire since the IRA truce in August 1994, said: "We cannot look on idly as the British cynically draw out and fudge attempts at a negotiated settlement." However, the threat

was also seen as an attempt by the INLA leadership to reassert its authority amid an internal feud which has claimed three lives.

David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, is expected today to call on the British and Irish governments to crack down on the IRA. In his first speech as leader to his party's annual meeting, Mr Trimble is likely to say that there is no prospect of the Republican movement committing itself to exclusively peaceful means and to insist that at the start of all-party talks on June 10 every political party must renounce violence, a principle of the Mitchell report.

Beef industry facing ruin

Continued from page 1
could not be bought for incineration.

And while the EU is equipped to sustain beef prices, there is no mechanism for the emergency relief of farmers who might be required to slaughter whole herds, officials said. British officials in Brussels said they would expect the EU to provide compensation.

While Commission officials were reviewing the crisis in Brussels yesterday, Britain's "mad cow" disease experts were meeting in private to answer the Health Secretary's key question: are children more at risk? Ministers have promised to accept the conse-

quences of their answer, even if it means the destruction of the entire national herd, and a Commons statement is expected on Monday.

Stephen Dorrell will also have to answer the Health and Agriculture select committees, which have set up a joint inquiry into the whole affair. The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, will be called, too, along with the Government's health, veterinary and scientific advisers.

The World Health Organisation's European Centre for Environment and Health is also calling for an immediate meeting of international experts to assess the public risks of "mad cow" disease, but

WHO said it believed that the controls imposed in Britain were adequate. Dr Lindsay Martinez, a specialist on emerging diseases, said there was still no proven link between the condition and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans and the measures taken were prudent and effective.

Nevertheless, the Consumers' Association said the only guarantee of safety was to stop eating beef. Its director, Sheila McKechie, said: "There is currently an unquantifiable risk in eating beef. Consumers who want to avoid the risk of BSE have no choice but to cut out beef and beef products from their diet."

Tory MP in
Labour row
meets critics

THE Tory MP for Leominster, Peter Temple-Morris, rejected demands from some local party activists yesterday to stand down after claims that he was out of step with Conservative ideology.

One of the leading figures on the party's left, Mr Temple-Morris, attempted last night at a constituency association meeting to placate critics infuriated by a newspaper interview in which he suggested that, if he were entering politics now, he might join Labour or the Liberal Democrats. There was no attempt to deflect him.

National paedophile
register to be set up

The Home Secretary is planning to set up a nationwide register of convicted paedophiles to prevent them attacking or working with children again. He is also to put forward plans for tightening arrangements for supervising convicted sex offenders after they are released from prison.

Proposals being studied are a new residential order and a child protection order. A judge would impose a residential order on a convicted paedophile, placing him under a lifelong duty to inform police where he lived. The child protection order would bar a convicted paedophile from working with children.

Letters, page 23

Queen to honour Jews

The Queen will now lay a wreath in Warsaw to the memory of Jews who died in the Holocaust. Jewish leaders had expressed disappointment that during her state visit to Poland next week the Queen would not visit any former Nazi concentration camp. But the royal itinerary was amended to include a ceremony at the Umslagplatz in Warsaw from where Jews were sent to Treblinka.

Chinook black box call

The Ministry of Defence was urged yesterday to fit cockpit voice recorders to all RAF Chinook helicopters by Sheriff Sir Stephen Young, who held a fatal accident inquiry into the death of 25 anti-terrorist experts and four crew of a Chinook that crashed in fog in 1994. The MoD said that, partly for budgetary reasons, cockpit voice recorders and black boxes would not be installed until 1997-98.

Footballers to stand trial

Three soccer stars are to stand trial at Crown Court over match-fixing claims. Bruce Grobbelaar, 38, John Fashanu, 32, formerly of Aston Villa, and Hans Segers, 34, were committed to Winchester Crown Court with a Malaysian businessman, Heng Lim, by a magistrate at Eastleigh, Hampshire. They are accused of conspiring to give and accept money to influence match results.

Labour asked to rethink

A High Court judge invited Labour's National Executive Committee to rethink its decision to impose a candidate to fight Swindon North. Jim D'Avila, a union shop steward, had sought an injunction banning the NEC from endorsing any candidate until a new ballot had been held on the ground that selection by committee was irrational and against the principle of one member, one vote.

Life for dog row killer

A man who murdered his neighbour because his puppy would not stop barking was jailed for life yesterday at Winchester Crown Court. Nicholas Farnell, 33, attacked Bill Pottage, 56, a factory manager, with a crowbar in front of his wife as the couple returned from a shopping trip. Farnell, a roofer, of Waterlooville, Hampshire, had denied murder but admitted manslaughter.

RSPCA warns hunters

The RSPCA told supporters of foxhunting that it was on its guard against infiltration. Hundreds of field-sports enthusiasts are said to have applied for membership in an attempt to soften the organisation's opposition to hunting. Ron Kirkby, chairman of its governing council, said: "We wish to reiterate the society's policy of total opposition to hunting with dogs."

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NATIONAL
SAVINGS

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Struck-off GP ruled on ethics

Patients trusted doctor who used lover to falsify drug trial results

BY DOMINIC KENNEDY AND KATE ALDERSON

A FAMILY doctor who was ordered to be struck off the medical register yesterday was so trusted by patients and staff that he was able to get away with his fraud for years. Geoffrey Fairhurst used his lover Debbie Barker, a research assistant, to falsify records for his lucrative drugs trials.

Dr Fairhurst was finally caught out by David Edwards, the practice partner he used to bully, who reported his suspicions of fraud to the General Medical Council.

Dr Fairhurst's patients had such faith in him that they unquestioningly accepted his explanations for his occasional odd behaviour. Constance Jerram, 74, who was confined to a wheelchair, wondered why the general practitioner seemed so keen to take samples of her blood, but never doubted that he was putting her interests first.

"I thought he was looking after me. I didn't question him. I trusted him," Mrs Jerram, a widow who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and chronic bronchitis, told the disciplinary hearing.

"Dr Fairhurst never asked me to go into any trial or test," Mrs Jerram said. Yet he apparently signed her up for trial of two drugs in 1993. Twice in a fortnight he took three phials of her blood.

"I asked him if he was looking for something specific. He said not really. He said he was testing. That was the only time he said the word test," Mrs Jerram said. "The second time he took three more and the next visit I asked him if he had the results. He said,



Fairhurst caught out by bullied partner

"they're fine. I never got to find out the results. He never showed me a consent form."

Mrs Barker admitted her former lover told her to put the wrong date on electrocardiogram records of patients taking part in drugs trials. "At the time I thought I would be the next Mrs Fairhurst," she said.

The ECGs had to be carried out on a specific date laid down as part of the trials. They were often carried out on other dates and she was told to backdate the records to make it look as if nothing was amiss.

To try to cover his tracks, Dr Fairhurst told a patient, Sandra Noble, that his colleague Dr Edwards was giving her husband Harry, 74, a potentially lethal drug. "I had known Dr Fairhurst for about 14 years. He had been a good doctor to me," Mrs Noble said.

"He said that Dr Edwards had my husband on a study. I said it is dangerous and he

said yes. He said Dr Edwards got paid for it. He said it was £500 I think. I said could it kill him and he said yes. I just went to pieces. I went home and woke my husband up to tell him about what was going on and to stop taking the tablets."

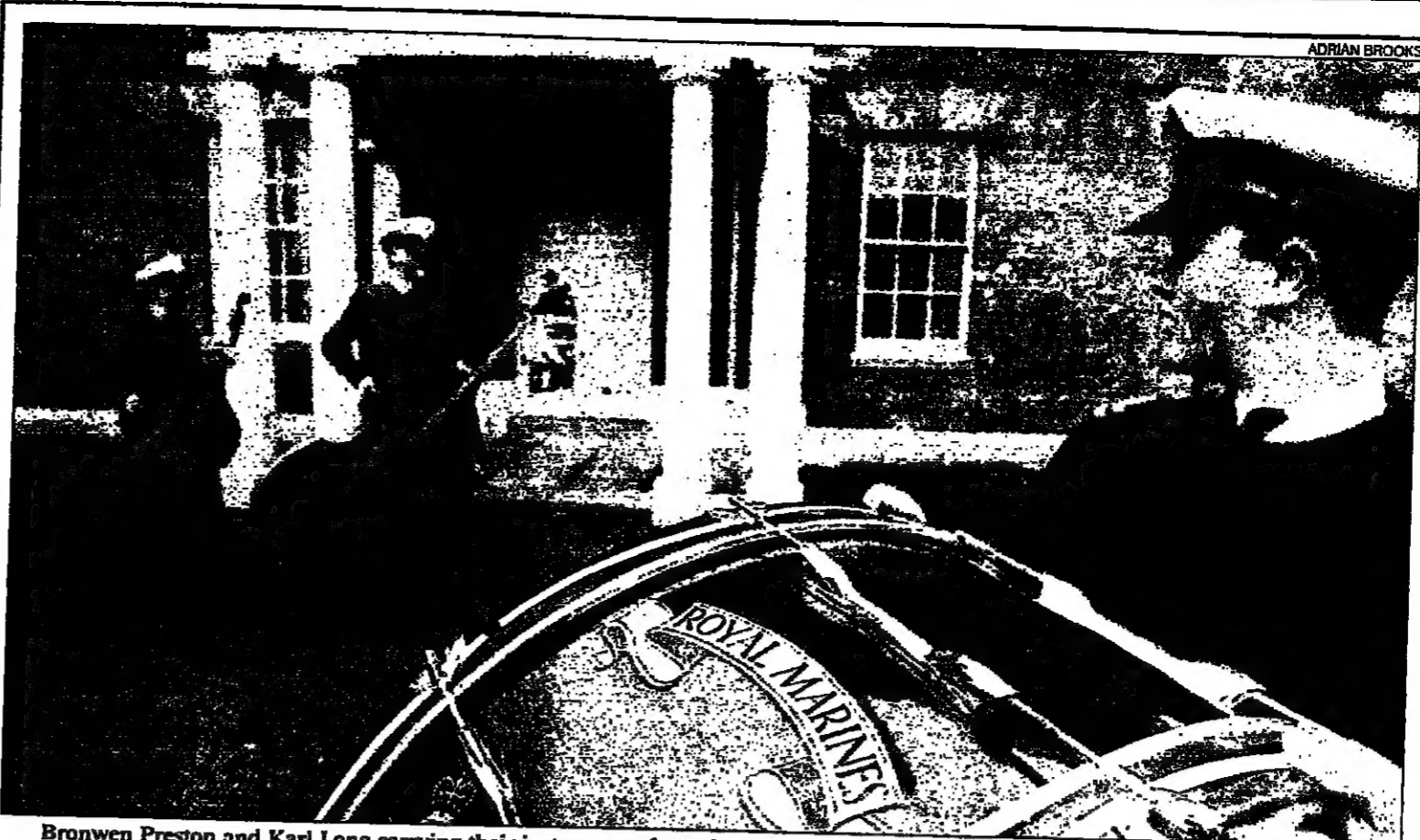
Fairhurst was caught after the unrelated death of another patient. Dr Edwards told the hearing: "Dr Fairhurst appeared to be carrying out his clinical trials in treatment time. The finances from this went solely into his private company."

"I had access to his consulting room which was next to mine but his research work was in separate offices which were kept locked upstairs. Following the death of one patient it became clear to me that patients were entered in clinical trials without informed consent."

In another attempt to cover the traces, Dr Fairhurst ordered Irene Hill, a practice nurse, to prepare fake electrocardiogram test results using a list of patients. "I did not appreciate I might have been doing something wrong," she said. "He was my boss and he told me to do it."

For ten years Dr Geoffrey Fairhurst was a member of the local medical ethics committee in St Helens and Knowsley, Merseyside.

Dr Bijoy Sinha, secretary of the local medical committee which nominated Fairhurst on to the ethics committee, said yesterday he was shocked at yesterday's finding. "I have known Dr Fairhurst for 20 years and I have always been struck by his professional integrity," he said. "That is one of the reasons he was elected on to the committee."



Bronwen Preston and Karl Long carrying their instruments from the Royal Marines School of Music, supervised by Lt Allen Head

Deal bids a final farewell to Royal Marines

BY JOHN YOUNG

THE people of Deal in Kent, turned out in their thousands in the rain yesterday to bid an emotional farewell to the Royal Marines who have been associated with the town for more than 135 years.

With recollections of the IRA bombing which killed 11 bandsmen seven years ago still fresh, there was strict security, with cars banned from the route of the march, telephone boxes sealed and policemen

searching the basement areas in front of houses. Last night's ceremony began with *Farewell To Deal*, a musical fanfare written for the occasion. There followed a musical recreation of the Battle of Trafalgar, including a spectacular display of fireworks, before the lowering of the Union Flag in the parade ground outside the officers' mess.

Bandsmen from the Royal Marines School of Music marched through the town, ending with the sunset ceremony, the traditional

military farewell to fallen and departed comrades. The attachment of local people to the Marines was shown after the IRA bombing, when they raised more than £1 million for victims' families. Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister, said the heart of the town would be torn out if the school closed, but financial considerations have since forced a change of mind and the bandsmen will be transferred to Portsmouth and Plymouth.

Commander Philip Wilson, the

school's head, said: "The barracks here can house 2,500 people but we are down to the low hundreds. It doesn't make economic sense for the politicians to keep it open."

Marianne McNicholas, who was Mayor of Deal at the time of the bombing, said: "The Marines hold a special place in British hearts, and in Deal we are fiercely proud of them." The Marines have been in Deal since 1860, when they took over a hospital for casualties from the Napoleonic wars.

On-spot fines if dogs foul of new law

BY JAMES LANDALE

OWNERS of dogs that foul public places face on-the-spot fines imposed by council workers under proposals approved by the Commons yesterday. Those who failed to pay within a fortnight could be fined up to £1,000 in court.

The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Bill, which is expected to become law later this year, would allow councils to designate public areas as "mess-free zones". It would be no defence for owners to say that they were unaware that a nuisance had been caused.

At present, local authorities have to use bylaws to prosecute offenders through the courts and are deterred by the cost. The current maximum fine is £500.

The Bill, which creates a national offence, passed its final stage unopposed in the Commons and goes to the Lords. A similar Bill failed in the Upper House last year after peers expressed fears that it could be used by councils to ban hunting on some land. The new Bill closes that loophole by outlining areas where the law would not apply. They include National Parks, farmland, woods, moors and commons.

Under bylaws, councils need permission from the Environment Secretary to designate areas and can face delays of several years. The Bill, which applies to England and Wales, allows councils to designate outdoor areas themselves. Although the law would apply to private land, it would not be enforceable without the owner's consent.

The Bill was welcomed by environmental groups and "pooper-scooper" manufacturers. Steve Roby, sales manager for Happy Pet Products, said: "Lots of people are cleaning up after their dogs already, but this measure will catch people who have yet got round to doing so."

James Clappison, a junior Environment Minister, said the Bill would be welcomed by dog-owners "because they want to see and promote responsible dog-ownership".



Prosser is filmed being taken to the prison hospital

Prison suicide attempt blamed on TV film crew

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE governor of Dartmoor prison has accused a fly-on-the-wall television documentary crew of prompting a convicted murderer to attempt suicide in front of the cameras as a deliberate ploy to gain media exposure.

John Lawrence said he was convinced that Royston Prosser, who is serving a life sentence for murder, would not have risked his life by taking an overdose of paracetamol tablets had television cameras not been present to film the incident.

"It was a totally manipulative gesture on his part. He was clearly acting up for the cameras," Mr Lawrence said. Prosser was filmed stuffing the pills into his mouth for a minute and a half by a crew from the independent production company Two Four. He told them he would rather take his own life than agree to be transferred to Cardiff.

Addressing the camera, he says: "I'm afraid I'm going to have to take certain precautions now. I may have to take my own life... I'm taking another 12 (tablets) now, alright? ... Some more. That's 52 tablets."

The crew claim to have saved his life by raising the alarm. They filmed him collapsing on a bench and being taken to the prison hospital wing, where he recovered. He was later transferred to a

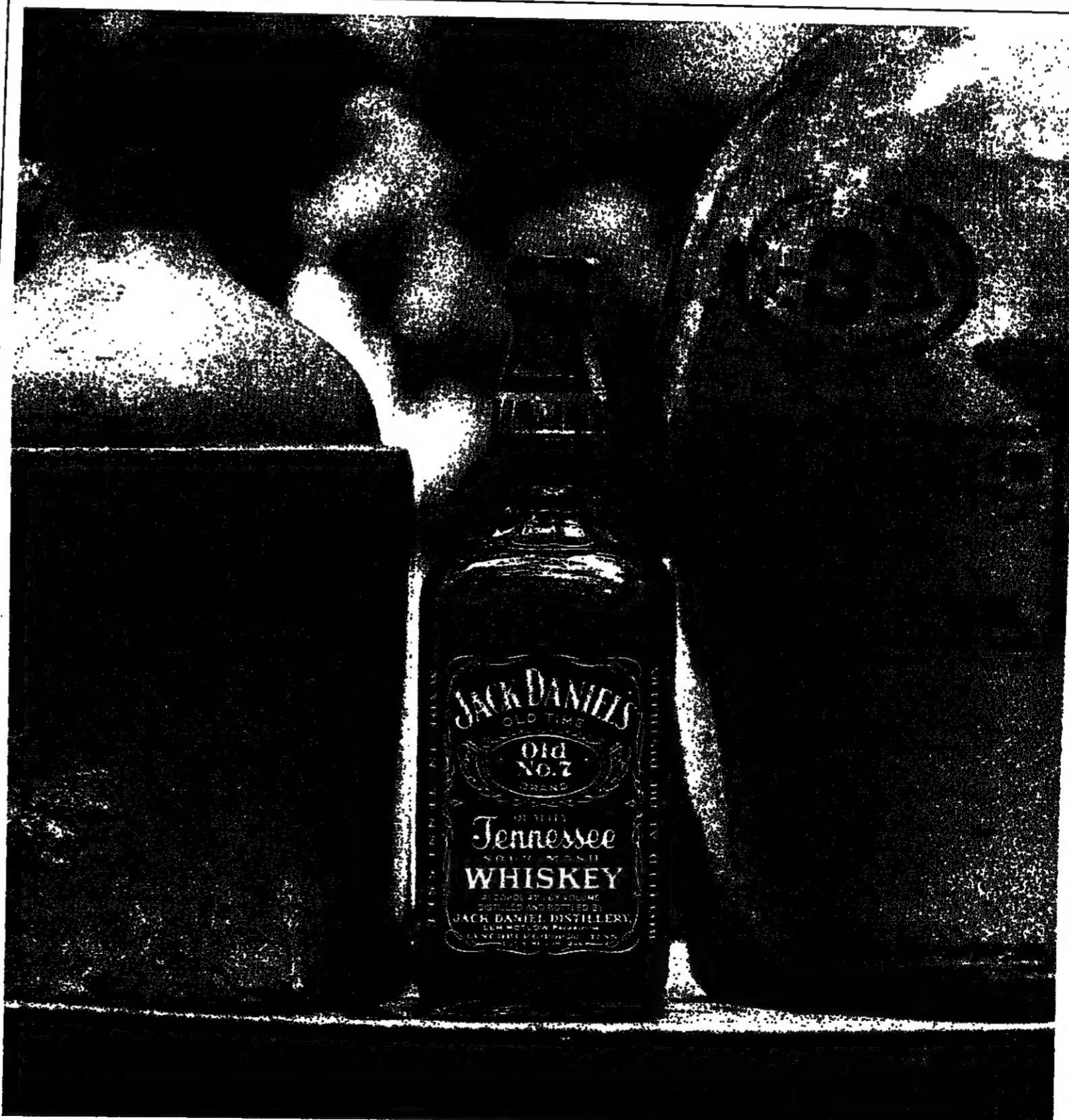
prison of his choice. Mr Lawrence said that the television crew had allowed themselves to be manipulated by Prosser, who had threatened suicide before.

He added, however, that it would have been too expensive to assign a prison officer to accompany the crew all the time. Instead they were given a set of security keys, which allowed them to move freely from wing to wing.

Don Wood, branch secretary of the Prison Officers' Association at Dartmoor, said: "The cameras create a totally false atmosphere. The prisoners only show what they want to show. The minute you bring cameras in it raises the tension. All of the banter between the officers and prisoners disappears," he said.

Mr Wood, who has 20 years' experience in the service, accused the programme-makers of behaving irresponsibly by waiting for Prosser to swallow the tablets before raising the alarm.

Andy Kemp, director of the film, which is to be shown on ITV this spring, conceded that the presence of the crew probably prompted Prosser to act when he did. "It was a golden opportunity for him that he could be caught on camera, but I have no doubt that he would have done it anyway at some point," he said.



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Downfall of woman who handled millions but failed to spot stolen £400,000 came from Polly Peck

Jet-setting banker laundered cash to pay Nadir's debts

By JON ASHWORTH
AND ROBERT MILLER

LAST night, as Elizabeth Forsyth was taken to Holloway Prison in London after being convicted on two counts of handling £400,000 of stolen money, she must have contemplated how far she had fallen. She might remember that fateful autumn day in 1989 when her Range Rover swept through the streets of Geneva. As a former banker to Saudi princes and other wealthy foreigners, she had walked around London carrying £1 million or more in cash and was used to the vagaries of the rich. She led a jet-set life, flitting between the UK, Switzerland and northern Cyprus in her role as personal adviser to Asil Nadir, mercurial founder of Polly Peck International (PPI).

Unusual requests were all part of the job Forsyth, then 50, had taken on in June 1987. She left her position looking after "high net worth" private customers at Citibank in Berkeley Square, central London, where Mr Nadir was one of her clients. Part of the attraction was a three-year



Nadir hired Forsyth as trusted aide

contract worth £45,000 a year, plus car and expenses.

Earlier on that day in Geneva, Forsyth had received a call from Jason Davies, a former colleague from London working for Mr Nadir in Switzerland, and now believed to be in Spain. He told her that the sum of £400,000 was awaiting collection at a local bank.

What happened next would return to haunt Forsyth 6½ years later, when she went on

trial at the Old Bailey after an investigation by the Serious Fraud Office. She claimed not to have noticed the name PPI on a receipt when she collected the money, packaged in bundles of £50 notes.

She saw nothing improper in paying £310,000 in cash into a bank round the corner, nor in carrying £88,050 back to London in a briefcase. Mr Davies had given her a perfectly reasonable explanation for it all, but she could not recall what it was.

Clearly, the jury of seven women and five men did not believe Forsyth, who was found guilty by a majority of 11-1. The money was transferred from PPI to Switzerland and sent back to the UK to settle Mr Nadir's private debts.

The bulk went to pay for shares purchased by A J Bekhor, a now defunct firm of stockbrokers. The rest went to buy cattle for the Baggrave estate in Leicestershire, which Mr Nadir was seeking to turn into a model of farming excellence.

Forsyth's lawyers argued that the £400,000 had been matched in northern Cyprus

by local investors and had never been "stolen". But too many questions remained unanswered. "Why send the money on a round trip to Switzerland at considerable expense when it could easily be transferred in London? Why carry such large sums in cash, when a cheque would have sufficed?"

Forsyth's stint in the witness box did her few favours. Here

was a highly articulate and intelligent woman who suffered a surprising lapse of memory when it came to this one particular transaction. Surely, as an ex-banker, she could not have failed to spot the PPI name on the receipt and would have realised something was amiss.

Her conviction bodes ill for Mr Nadir, who was hoping to use her acquittal as a "spring-

board" for a triumphal return to Britain. The Serious Fraud Office has 66 potential charges involving £150 million to bring. A warrant for his arrest remains outstanding.

For the jury, the burden of suspicion relating to Mr Nadir pointed to northern Cyprus and Unipac, a PPI subsidiary which made cardboard boxes. Expert witnesses said ledgers, cash books and

bank statements listing cash payments into Unipac on behalf of PPI appeared genuine, but could not rule out the possibility that they had been fabricated.

The sums purportedly deposited — billions in Turkish lira — might have exceeded all the currency in circulation in the territory. Such transactions simply were not possible. Forsyth returned voluntarily

to Britain from northern Cyprus in September 1994. As chairman of South Audley Management (SAM), set up to oversee Mr Nadir's private interests, she maintained all along that she was no more than a trusted lieutenant, liaising with accountants, and purchasing cattle for Baggrave farm.

The jury clearly thought otherwise.



Elizabeth Forsyth in northern Cyprus before she came home to Britain in 1994. Her conviction bodes ill for Mr Nadir's hopes of returning

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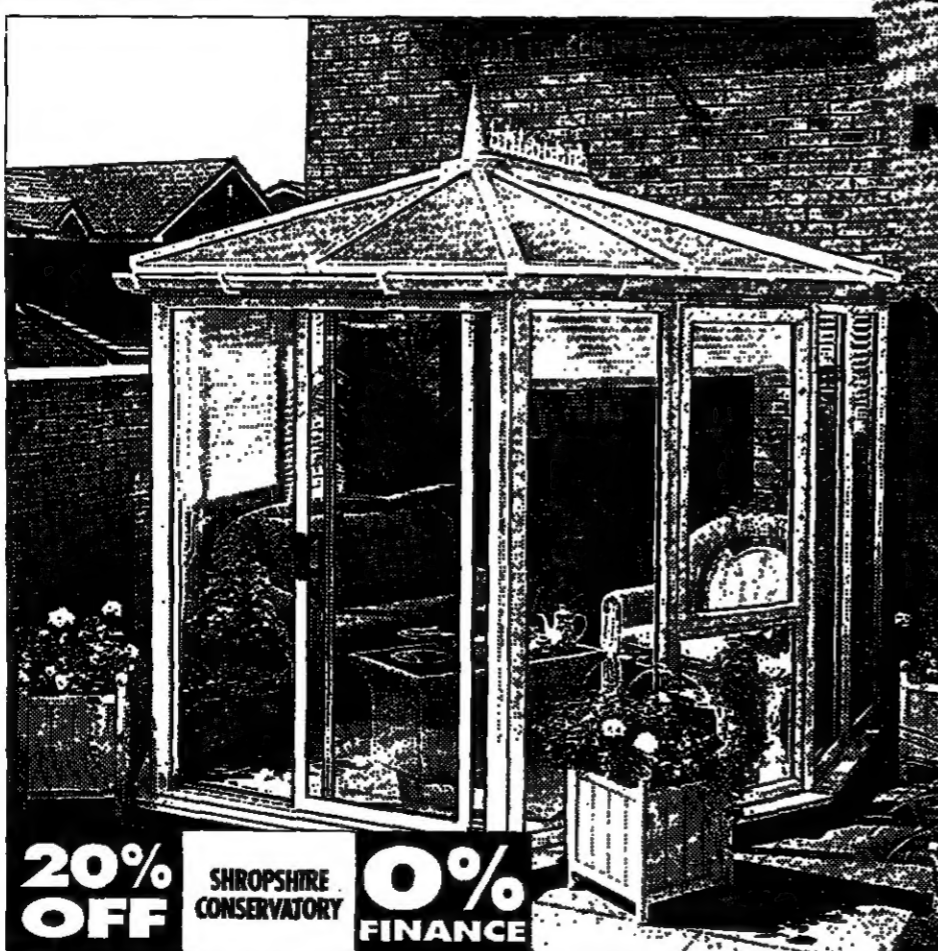
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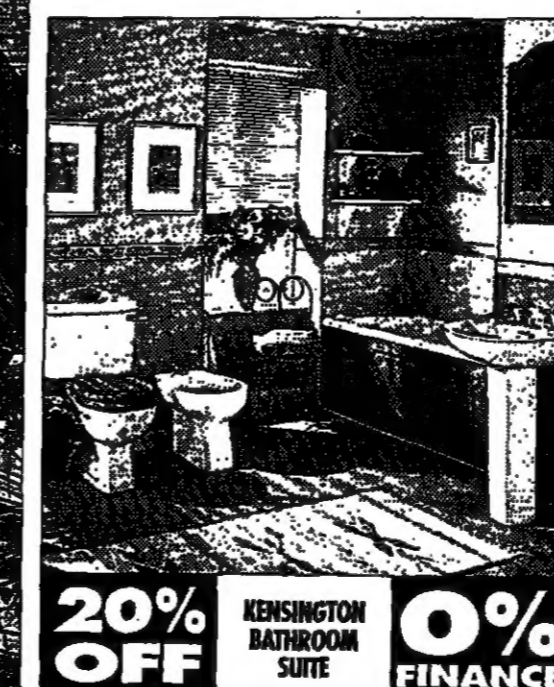
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MUST END NEXT WEEKEND

Swiss pair refused to give evidence

By JON ASHWORTH

THE Attorney-General is to consider the case of two Swiss-based British businessmen who declined to give evidence in the case of Elizabeth Forsyth, Ian McNeil and Roger Leopold, directors of Rhône Finance in Geneva, were heavily criticised by the trial judge, Mr Justice Tucker.

Reporting on the action was prohibited until the conclusion of proceedings against Mrs Forsyth. The trial was adjourned for four days to allow Mr Leopold to attend and a live television link-up was provided in Geneva for Mr McNeil, who was said to be too ill to travel to Britain.

David Calvert-Smith, for the Serious Fraud Office, was obliged to request a further adjournment, after receiving assurances that Mr Leopold would attend a day later than planned. Television studios were kept available for Mr McNeil at a cost of £20,000.

Mr Calvert-Smith then told the judge that Mr Leopold had taken advice from lawyers in Switzerland and been warned of undesirable consequences if he gave evidence. There was a fear that his answers might breach Swiss confidentiality laws, leaving him exposed to legal action, and further fears of "some sort of reprisal". Mr McNeil voiced similar concerns. The SFO suggested measures to help them but they both declined to appear.

The court heard there must have been a strong suspicion that the pair "never intended to give evidence at all". Geoffrey Robertson, QC, for the defence, told the judge of his suspicions that they "would never turn up in any shape or form".

The London Evening Standard and The Independent have been referred to the Attorney-General over "deplorable" articles at a sensitive stage of the trial.

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'After a long, dark week full of tears, today marks the beginning of our recovery'

Children's return renews hope at Dunblane school

By Gillian Bowditch

THE children of Dunblane returned to their primary school yesterday, some skipping, laughing and fighting, others sombre and clinging to their parents for reassurance.

It was the first time since the massacre of 16 pupils and their teacher in the school ten days ago that children had returned. The gym where the shootings took place has been sealed and boarded up.

Ron Taylor, the headmaster who was one of the first on the scene after the killings and who has spoken of the evil that visited the school, was there to greet his pupils. He emerged shortly after the school opened to speak to a small number of representative reporters and

photographers who had gathered outside with the full co-operation of the education authorities, parents and police. "As you can imagine, this has been a long, dark week full of tears. Dunblane is still in mourning. However, the evil that came last week has gone. This is a very important day for us because it marks the beginning of our recovery. And mark my words, we will recover — I promise you that."

"I was walking around the school and I came across a group of children laughing and joking together. I went round another corner and found a couple of kids arguing. Normality is returning."

We have really one priority now — to ensure our school becomes a happy place of learning once again."

He said the school would return to its usual timetable next week and after the Easter holidays teachers would expect the usual high standard of work produced by the pupils.

Not all the 700 pupils returned yesterday but Central Regional Council said no register was taken. It was a half-day and children and parents were free to come and go as they liked. Coffee was served to parents in the library and counsellors and social workers were on hand.

The first child arrived at 8.15am, a girl of about five with long blonde hair, accompanied by her parents. She skipped up the drive, eager to meet friends. A father who took his two boys to the school gates leant down and put an arm around their shoulders before they went in.

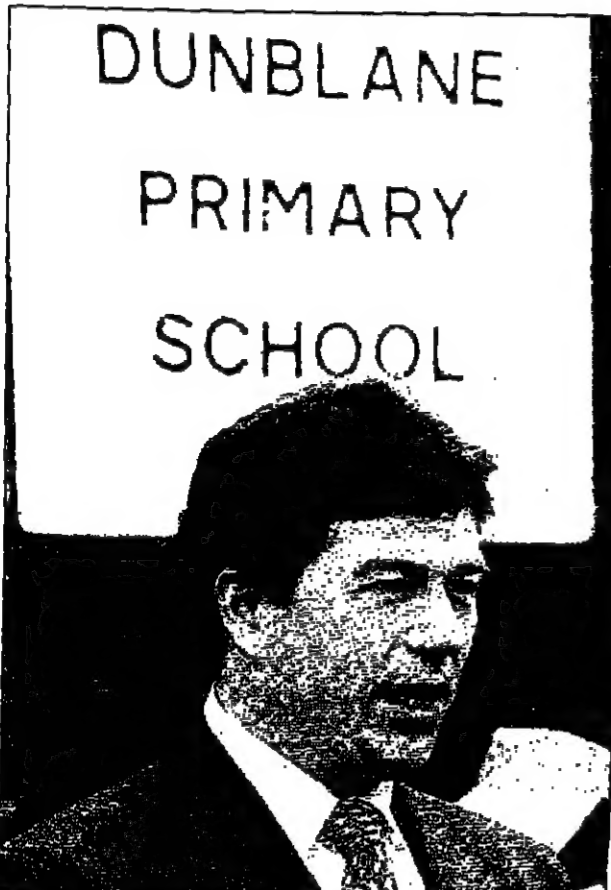
Other pupils arrived in small groups, brothers and sisters holding hands, some clutching favourite toys. Once through the gates, many broke into a run to greet friends they had not seen for days. The children gathered at first in groups in the playground and one small group played a game of tag.

Some chatted to a policeman inside the grounds. Most of the police activity has disappeared from the school, as have the flowers and soft toys that lined the pavement. They have been taken to the cemetery, Dunblane Cathedral and a church hall.

Mr Taylor said that the flowers and cards had been appreciated. "With the help of all the people in Dunblane, whose strength has been truly remarkable, and all the good wishes we have had from everybody from all over the world, we will be a good school again." He had been overwhelmed by flowers, let-



Two girls among pupils arriving yesterday for an informal half-day. Parents and counsellors were there too



Ron Taylor yesterday: he said that his priority was to make the school a happy place of learning again

Our role is not to forgive, says Carey

By Ruth Gledhill, Religion Correspondent

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said yesterday it was not for him or anyone else to dispense forgiveness on behalf of God to Thomas Hamilton, the Dunblane killer.

Dr Carey, preaching at St Paul's Cathedral in London, said there were always limits to forgiveness. Those limits depended on the response of the offender.

Addressing the United Guilds' service, attended by members of all 107 companies, Dr Carey said: "Sometimes after a tragedy like Dunblane, the word 'forgiveness' trips too lightly from people's lips."

"But you will note here how others cannot do the forgiving on behalf of the one who has been wronged. It is the latter who first rebukes and then, subsequently, if repentance comes, may then forgive."

Dr Carey said: "There is severe judgment for those who commit great crimes against God's little ones, who are precious to Him and infinitely valuable."

The Archbishop added: "We cannot know — nor should we speculate — what the relationship now is between Thomas Hamilton and his maker. It is not for you and me to dispense forgiveness on God's behalf or on behalf of Hamilton's innocent victims."

"What we can recognise is the heinousness of his crime and the seriousness with which God treats it. But perhaps too as Good Friday approaches we can sense afresh something of the desolation of Christ's death on the Cross. The death that brings justice and mercy together. And of Easter, which offers new possibilities."

Dr Carey said there was no future for any society with no values, "no sense of right and wrong, no concept of eternal truths and no awareness of God". He added: "If duty springs from the service we owe, then faith springs from the character of God." Faith was needed for a firm foundation of moral values.

Wakeham praises media's restraint

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, praised the media for its mature and sympathetic coverage of the Dunblane massacre. Speaking at a journalism awards ceremony in Bournemouth yesterday, he said: "It seems to me that yet again the press has demonstrated it can behave in a mature and responsible way."

In reporting the terrible events at Dunblane, the press seems to have balanced correctly the public's right to know with the feelings of the grieving community. Special commendations in these circumstances can be invaluable, but I would single out the Press Association for the crucial role it played in arranging and providing an effective pool service to the entire media. Their role was essential to the successful handling of the matter."

Letters, page 23

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Organic producers call for support as evidence emerges of BSE outbreaks in Europe

Cattle farmers take stock as sales of beef plummet

BY MICHAEL HORNSBY
AGRICULTURE
CORRESPONDENT

CATTLE farmers are facing a bleak future with consumer confidence in beef plummeting and foreign countries imposing bans to keep out what is seen as an irretrievably contaminated product.

The latest scientific findings, suggesting a causal link between bovine spongiform encephalopathy, "mad cow" disease, and a new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, its human equivalent, have left many feeling that life and their finances will never be the same again.

Martin Burt, the chairman of the National Farmers' Union's livestock committee, said: "I am at my wit's end. It is getting to me personally. It is such a horrendous situation with no obvious light at the end of the tunnel."

On his 250-acre farm near Whithy in the North Yorkshire dales, Mr Burt keeps 100 dairy cows from which he produces up to 70 calves for the beef trade every year.

"Up to 20 per cent of my income comes from the calf sales," he said. "I cannot

THE FUTURE

switch to arable farming because the land here is not suitable. I could expand my flock of 200 ewes, but you need an awful lot of sheep to replace income from beef. I would probably have to increase my flock by up to 30 per cent and I do not have enough land to sustain that number."

Lowland cattle farmers appear to have more choices. Ian Gardiner, the director of policy at the NFU, said: "Technically some could switch to arable farming, but new land coming into crops would not qualify for subsidies."

One group of farmers who believe they have an answer is Britain's small band of devotees of organic methods. They believe BSE is only one of many ills that can be attributed to the growing industrialisation of farming over the past 50 years.

Patrick Holden, the chairman of the Soil Association, which represents the organic lobby, said: "BSE is the latest symptom of the breakdown of health in an industry whose practices have been violating nature for the last 40 years."

Organic farming offers a way of restoring consumer confidence in food."

Organic farmers use no pesticides or artificial fertiliser. They stopped feeding all animal material to cattle, which are herbivorous by nature, 13 years ago. Had other farmers done the same, BSE might never have occurred; the disease is believed to have been caused by feed containing the scrapie-contaminated remains of sheep.

There are only 800 organic farmers in Britain, occupying less than 1 per cent of farmland. Mr Holden believes there is untapped demand for organic food and that far more farmers would supply it if the system of subsidies were not weighted in favour of conventional high-output farming.

"In some other countries much more support is given to organic farming," he said. "Austria now has 12 per cent of farmland being farmed organically. Here, over the past 15 months, £141,000 has been spent on helping farmers to switch to organic methods, compared with £2.2 billion in a single year on crop subsidies, livestock subsidies and set-aside."



Angela Browning, the Agriculture Minister, fielding farmers' questions at Exeter University yesterday

Hint of a smile in face of despair

BY JOANNA BAILE

THE question to Angela Browning, the junior Agriculture Minister, was delivered in a deadly serious tone, but even the most depressed beef farmer could not help but raise a wistful smile. A farmer from Cornwall rose from his seat and politely inquired: "When I was a teenager we used to take to the dancefloor full of Double Diamond, now they go on full of social drugs."

THE MINISTER

Could that be what is causing CJD in younger people?"

It was the first question in an hour-long emergency meeting with 500 farmers in Exeter and Mrs Browning's heart must have sunk. But, professional as ever, she replied: "I cannot say whether they have looked specifically at that as a causal base, but what I do know is that the CJD surveil-

lance unit cannot identify what might make these people different to the others and it is because of this we have had to take cautionary steps."

The audience of tweed-clad farmers in their Sunday best had travelled from all over the South West to a packed lecture theatre at Exeter University for the meeting, organised by the National Farmers Union.

With a faint farmyard aroma lingering in the air, they listened attentively as the min-

ister continued to explain that, at this stage, scientists thought only that their "may be a link" between BSE and the new strain of CJD. There was no concrete evidence, she said in reassuring tones, and the farmers remained defiant.

Time after time, the point was repeated in a variety of West Country accents: "There's no proof — it's just the media whipping up hysteria." But you could sense the despair in their voices.

OTHER CASES

Britain is not only infected country

BY MICHAEL HORNSBY
AND PETER CAPELLA

BRITAIN is the only country to have had a serious epidemic of "mad cow" disease in its cattle herd, but other countries have also reported cases.

Switzerland has reported 206 cases since 1990, with 19 this year. France, Germany and Portugal, which have suspended imports of British beef, have also reported cases, although those in Germany involved animals imported from Britain.

The infected cattle abroad are presumed to have eaten the same kind of feed, containing scrapie-contaminated beef

Country	Imported from UK	Total cases
Great Britain		156,000
Northern Ireland		1,680
Isle of Man		406
Guernsey		575
Jersey		119
Alderney		2
Republic of Ireland		123
France		206
Switzerland	3	31
Portugal	1	4
Canada	1	1
Germany	4	1
Oman	2	2
Denmark	1	1
Italy	2	2
Falklands	1	1

and sheep offal, that is believed to have caused BSE in Britain. In the late 1980s Britain exported considerable amounts of such feed.

There has long been a suspicion that the incidence of BSE in France may be higher than admitted. France is known to have imported British feed, but it is fed mainly to pigs and poultry. The high number of Swiss cases may be due to their diligence in looking for the disease.

It is possible that vets and farmers in other countries are failing to pick up the disease because they have had less practice in recognising it.

The roast that made 'our soldiers brave and our courtiers good'



Historic "beefeater"

BY BILL FROST

FOR more than 400 years of British history, roast beef dripping in its own delicious juices was both a culinary and cultural icon. Now an old friend has been unmasked as a deadly foe, or so most of the world would have us believe.

Beef has inspired poets, playwrights and authors from Shakespeare to Fielding, given us a name for the guardians of the Tower of London and fed generations of warriors. "Pudding and beef make Britons fight," wrote Matthew Prior

CULTURAL ICON

in his *Alma* of 1716. Fielding agreed 25 years later when he wrote in *The Grub Street Opera*: "When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food it ennobled our hearts and enriched our blood — our soldiers were brave and our courtiers were good."

History teaches that nations which lose a national dish or dietary staple through carelessness, greed or stupidity need a great deal of time to recover from the blow. Without the

buffalo — slaughtered in their hundreds by American hunters — the plains Indians had neither food nor skins to make into clothes and teepees. Crushing defeat at the hands of the US Cavalry was as swift as it was inevitable.

The great potato famines of the last century in Ireland caused similar catastrophe and launched a wave of mass emigration and bitterness against the British "planters".

Adulterated cooking oil killed up to 600 people in Spain in 1981 and harmed a further 25,000. Spanish olive oil was banned by France and

other European countries. The bottom dropped out of the domestic market as those affected sought redress in the courts.

At the time, Spanish health authorities said it was unclear what symptoms might develop among those who ingested the contaminated oil. Years later, some sufferers developed progressive muscular and neuromuscular disability.

In 1985 catastrophe overtook the Austrian wine industry, always acclaimed for the clean and sharp bouquet of its vintages. It was no organism feeding on the vines

thought unscrupulous producers were cutting the product with antifreeze to add to body and "mouth feel". A subsequent scandal in Italy, involving the use of methanol, killed 21 people but, strangely, it was the Austrians who bore the brunt of continuing consumer hostility and suspicion.

What threatens British beef this weekend is a far more damaging prospect: the rest of the world lined up implacably against a dish central to our national life and as typical of our image abroad as the bowler hat and the bulldog.

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COMPUTERS, COMMUNICATIONS, MICROELECTRONICS

Top restaurants are standing firm over beef dishes in face of international reaction

Supermarkets act to calm fears among shoppers

BY CAROL MIDDLEY

THE Co-op announced yesterday that, for the first time in its 150-year history, it was considering buying beef from abroad in an effort to allay consumer fears over British produce. Tesco said that it would relabel every one of its own-brand products to alert customers to whether they contained beef, gelatin, suet, lard, stock or gravy.

However, some of the country's best-known restaurants continued to serve beef, declaring "absolute confidence" in the quality of their meats. Some removed offal-based products and steak and kidney pie from the menu but said their customers' desire for beef had been undimmed by the panic.

Today information leaflets will be handed to customers in every Tesco store and each customer service desk will offer lists of beef-free products. The Co-op, which has 3,000 stores, insisted that, although it was not deserting the British beef industry, it had to be realistic about consumer demand.

"We will be looking at providing alternatives because we recognise that this particular problem will result in consumers switching to other products," a spokesman said.

"There is an opportunity to import beef from abroad from Australia, New Zealand and South America." He added that while other foreign cuts of meat, such as lamb, had been stocked on Co-op shelves for some time, beef had always come from British producers.

"It is something we are looking at very carefully. But while there may be a BSE problem in British beef, we have to make absolutely sure there are not other problems in other countries."

"It will be at least four weeks before we foreign beef would be in our stores. We must be sure that it's not a case of 'out of the frying pan, into the fire'." Tesco was busily re-

THE CONSUMER



Blanc hoping for the death of beefburgers

Jamie Younger, second chef at Bibendum, the west London restaurant owned by Sir Terence Conran, said: "We expected the beef dishes to be pretty unpopular last night but we sold absolutely loads."

Raymond Blanc, dynamic creator of Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons, at Great Milton, Oxfordshire, said: "I will certainly not be taking beef off my menu because I use only the finest cuts from Aberdeen Angus cattle which have enjoyed good food, a good life and natural rearing, none of this nightmarish animal feed that has caused this problem."

"However I will say that if this scare spells the death of the beefburger I will be helpless with joy."

Anthony Worrall-Thompson, owner of six London restaurants, is also keeping his high-quality beef on offer and has changed his menu to preface beef dishes with "grass fed ox meat". He has also erected signs on his six restaurant windows declaring "BSE-free zone".

"I have suspended my staff from eating the meat pies they used to enjoy and have told all the restaurants not to use cow's offal. We are also testing squirrel and alligator meat, which might make a change for some."

As an alternative to beef for the Sunday roast this weekend Mr Worrall-Thompson recommended wild boar, water buffalo or ostrich meat.

At Simply Nico, in Victoria, London, prime beef cuts from Scotland were being kept on but plans to introduce an oxtail dish this weekend had been cancelled. Nico Ladenis, the chef and proprietor said: "I do think the whole thing is getting out of hand. People are still slipping on banana skins and dying on the roads—we have to keep things in perspective."

The Savoy said it would continue to serve beef. At the Ritz, beef was not on the menu anyway. "Spring lamb is the seasonal meat," a spokesman said.



A Paris butcher displaying a sign reading "No English offal here. Eat French", as fear spreads over "mad cow" disease, rendered in a variety of languages below

**Rinderwahnsinn
Kein Fleisch
mehr aus
England!**

**La mucca
pazza
all'arma
F'Europa**

French: maladie de la vache folle
German: Rinderwahnsinn
Italian: malattia delle mucche pazze
Spanish: mal de las vacas locas
Dutch: gekkekoelziekte
Swedish: galna kosjukan
Danish: Ko-galskab
Finnish: hullun lehmän tauti
Portuguese: doença as vacas loucas
Greek: trelles agelades
Zulu: akugula kwezi nkomo ezibhanyayo
Afrikaans: malkoeciëkte

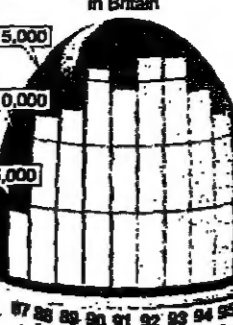
Bitter replay of the last big food scare

BY ANDREW PIERCE

SALMONELLA

SICK OF EGGS?

Cases of salmonella enteritidis in Britain



THE number of cases of salmonella poisoning, which triggered a crisis in the British egg industry in 1988, has risen sharply after ministerial pledges to eradicate the bacterium. Despite a battery of environmental health regulations, the incidence of salmonella enteritidis, the strain prevalent in poultry, has increased virtually every year since the eggs fiasco.

Food poisoning is at the highest level since records began in 1949, with 80,000 cases last year compared with 63,000 for 1992. The number of cases has risen fivefold over the last decade. An increase in eating out, takeaways and beefburger bars is thought responsible.

Figures released by the Public Health Laboratory Service show that salmonella enteritidis remains as virulent today as in 1988. In 1987 there were 4,962 known cases. In 1988, the year the crisis erupted, the total had risen to 12,522 and it reached 17,000 in 1992. It eased back to 14,000 in 1994 and 12,500 last year. Figures for this year are expected to be around the same level.

Salmonella hit the headlines in December 1988 when Mrs Edwina Currie, a junior Health Minister, was asked to comment on a ban on the use of eggs in 25 Devon hospitals in response to previous government warnings. It was one of her last remarks before she was sacked. "We do warn people now that sadly most of the egg production in this country is infected with salmonella."

Stephen Dealler, a consultant macro-biologist, wished Mrs Currie had been in the Ministry of Agriculture. He said: "The truth about BSE might have come out sooner. We have been here before. When the Government knew about salmonella in egg production they initially denied there was any infection. But they were forced on the defensive when Edwina Currie blurted out the truth."

The salmonella in eggs fiasco has disturbing parallels with the BSE affair. In 1988

there was a sustained public debate over the feeding methods of farm livestock. The consequences for the industry were devastating. In 1987 there were 15,608 egg producers; today the number has virtually halved to 8,979.

Andrew Oakley, the chairman of the United Kingdom Egg Producers Association, said: "My life flashed in front of me when I heard about the BSE scare. Just like the beef producers, the first we knew about it was when we heard it from the media. But this is much more serious..."

Mrs Currie rejects assertions that the Government's handling of the BSE scare had been a public relations disaster. "Ministers have this time shared the information with the public... They are much more open than they were eight years ago when I was in the firing line."

But Max Clifford, the public relations guru, thought the last week had been the biggest disaster since salmonella. "It is a catastrophe. They are helping to destroy yet another British institution: the Sunday roast."

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VACANCY.
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When the monks who lived at Bury St. Edmunds abbey in the 13th century were allowed to speak (which wasn't very often), Latin was the holy order of the day. Indeed, for a young novice entering the monastery, it was a sine qua non. Fortunately, he would have found it far easier to get his tongue round the eight pints of the Abbot's Ale he was allowed in the evening. The ale was brewed in the monastery with natural spring water drawn from its own well. Today we're still drawing water from the same source for our own Abbot Ale. And while most other beers are fermented for just three or four days, Abbot Ale is fermented slowly for a full seven ('Blessed by the Sabbath') to give it a rich, deep flavour. Many have declared it to be one of the finest real ales around. And even, on occasions, the ne plus ultra.

ABBOT ALE
FROM GREENE KING

Judge will decide on the right to end life

By JEREMY LAURANCE

DOCTORS treating a woman who has been in a persistent vegetative state for more than four years have been told they may apply to a judge for permission to withdraw artificial feeding and allow her to die.

In the first case of its kind in Scotland, five senior judges at the Court of Session in Edinburgh ruled yesterday that Lord Cameron of Lochbroom could make the decision whether to end Janet Johnstone's life. The doctors at Law Hospital, Carlisle, Strathclyde, are supported by Mrs Johnstone's family.

The judges said that Lord Cameron's ruling would cover the doctors only against the civil law and not against criminal prosecution. That could be provided only by a public statement by the Lord Advocate, Lord Mackay of Drumadoon. Scotland's senior law officer. He said he would make a statement.

The case has added to confusion over people in a persistent vegetative state after details emerged this week of a patient who allegedly recovered awareness after seven years. At one stage hospital staff considered applying to the High Court to have his artificial feeding withdrawn, but when he was transferred to the Royal Hospital for Neurodisability in Putney, southwest London, staff there realised that he was able to communicate.

In a second case a brain-damaged musician, Geoffrey Wildsmith, 21, told police through a computer that he was attacked on a late-night train nearly two years ago.

The Royal College of Physicians issued the first clinical guidelines on the condition yesterday, but said that they may already be out of date.

The guidelines say that a diagnosis should be made only when a patient has been in a continuing vegetative state for more than 12 months after a head injury, or six months after other causes of brain damage. A vegetative state is one in which a patient has cycles of eye closure and opening which may simulate sleep and waking but who shows no awareness of self or environment.



Hidden treasure: the massive sketch of Jupiter and Semele found in the King's Drawing Room when the oval panel by William Kent was removed from the ceiling

Spring clean puts art experts in the picture

By DALYA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A MASSIVE, previously unknown 1720s line drawing has been discovered under an oval ceiling canvas in the King's Drawing Room at Kensington Palace. It was uncovered when the panel that had covered it for more than two centuries — a depiction of Jupiter appearing to Semele — was removed for extensive cleaning.

Both images are the work of William Kent (1685-1748), the architect and interior designer, who painted canvases in various parts of the palace. In removing the panel, curators were taken back to find that the sketch is an almost exact replica of the canvas, except for a yapping spaniel added to the final composition.

Nigel Arch, director of the state apartments at Kensington Palace — which boast a collection of Van Dycks and Titianesque — said curators assumed that the artist was trying out the scale of the canvas. Otherwise, he suggested, he was planning to paint on to the plaster.



Curators had no idea what was hidden behind Kent's painted ceiling at Kensington Palace

but decided it was easier to paint at ground level and then attach the work to the ceiling.

Kent studied painting between 1709 and 1719 in Rome, where he met Lord Burlington, who became his influential patron. In 1719, Kent

completed Ricci's unfinished paintings in Burlington House, now the Royal Academy. He worked at Kensington Palace between 1722 and 1727.

Mr Arch said that Kent displayed acute business acumen in securing

the commission. It was meant to have gone to another artist, Sir James Thornhill, whose estimate for the job came to £800 — "a lot of money in the 1720s", Mr Arch said. "The Vice-Chamberlain thought that was too much," Kent, seizing

his chance, said he would do it for £500 and won the commission, even though Thornhill quickly reduced his price to the same level.

The ceiling panel will be returned to its position, covering up the drawing until the next time it needs to be cleaned. The King's Drawing Room is among state apartments open to the public from May 1 until the end of September.

A watercolour painted in 1801, one of only two panoramic views of London by Turner, is expected to fetch £60,000 at Christie's in London on April 2. The painting, *London: Autumnal Morning*, features cows on Clapham Common in the foreground, looking over Vauxhall towards Westminster and St Paul's.

The painting has been in private ownership for most of this century. Andrew Clayton-Payne, watercolour specialist at Christie's, described the work as "magnificent". It was one of only four exceptionally large watercolours exhibited by Turner at the Royal Academy in 1801, the year before he was elected a full Academician.

Dull skies spoil view for comet watchers

By NICK NUTTALL

ATTEMPTS to see the brightest comet for centuries will be frustrated this weekend by cloudy skies over most of the country.

Astronomers planning comet-gazing parties are pinning their hopes on cloudless skies for the evening of April 3. By chance a lunar eclipse will occur on that night, which should make Hyakutake's comet flash like a brilliant jewel in the night sky.

Professor Mark Bailey, director of the Armagh Observatory, who saw the comet with his naked eye last weekend, said yesterday: "The eclipse is at midnight on the night of April 3. The moon will become blood red and we might get quite a dark eclipse as the full moon fades." The eclipse should last 90 minutes.

Professor Bailey said the brightness of Hyakutake, named after the amateur Japanese astronomer who first saw it, meant that everyone in Britain should be able to see it "inching" across the horizon. He said binoculars would be worth taking to comet-watching parties to help to distinguish between the head and the fuzzy tail.

Enthusiasts are advised to contact libraries for the telephone number of a local astronomy group to find out where and when telescopes are being set up. Some universities and observatories, including Armagh, are organising Hyakutake-watching evenings, using their 10in and 16in telescopes.

Other advice is to leave urban areas, to avoid the light pollution that makes it harder to see even a bright object such as a comet. Dr John Mason of the British Astronomical Association said that Hyakutake would be closest to Earth on Monday night — at 10 million miles away.

It will be visible until the end of April, after which it will continue its celestial journey, returning to within sight of Earth again after another 1,700 years.

Dr Mason said: "In mid-April, with clear skies, the comet should be a splendid sight in the northwestern sky an hour after sunset and should exhibit a very fine, long, tail."

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Day of rest turns into a hagglers' paradise

By Nick Nuttall, Environment Correspondent

CAR boot sales, where cash is king and haggling the order of the day, are transforming the British Sunday.

In the first academic study of the phenomenon, researchers have found that more than a million people every weekend are shunning the piped music and security cameras of the shopping arcade in favour of the carnival atmosphere of the car boot sale.

Unlike the superstore, car boot sales offer "an excursion into curiosity and discovery. It is both a potential impromptu antique fair and a jumble sale. Quite simply one just does not know what one might find there," said the report, which was funded by the Government's Economic and Social Research Council.

Haggling for goods, providing the thrill of pitting wits against canny salesmen, emerged as a main reason for the popularity of sales. The average buy costs £8.

They attract people of all ages and social class, the researchers claim. About 40 per cent of those who go are employed "scotching the myth that the car boot sale is the preserve of recessionary Britain's underclass", the report says.

Car boot sales are also increasingly important for the environment as goods get recycled, it is claimed. But the study says that the essence of these sales is under threat from local authorities worried

that trading standards are being flouted and that business is being sucked from council-owned markets and malls. "However, any attempt to regulate them will kill off one of their principal attractions, namely their carnival spirit and lack of conventionality", the report's authors, Dr Nicky Gregson of the University of Sheffield and Dr Louise Crewe of the University of Nottingham, say.

"In many areas the Sunday morning landscape of Britain has been transformed. Fields, stadia, school playgrounds and car parks are taken over by row upon row of cars and by hordes of potential buyers," they note.

The study, based on a survey of 300 buyers and sellers in Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and the northeast of England, shows that sellers make £90 on average, but in some cases up to £800 at weekends.

The most popular purchases are children's clothes, followed by DIY equipment, videos, baby equipment, kitchen utensils and records.

In a separate survey, the researchers found a growing mood among councils to regulate the fairs. Of 350 local authorities questioned, many are considering ways to make organisers obtain planning permission while others may charge high licensing fees.

Leading article, page 23



Alan Watson and his family in front of their solar-powered home at the Findhorn Foundation. Plans to expand have angered villagers

Villagers rail against 'New Age Vatican'

By Gillian Bowditch, Scotland Correspondent

TO MILLIONS of New Age followers they represent a better way of life, but to villagers they threaten to swamp a small community on the Scottish coast.

The Findhorn Foundation, near Forres, Grampian, has become known as the "Vatican of the New Age" whose alternative vision attracts 11,000 people each year from across the world. But such adoration is not matched among locals, who say their traditional culture is in danger of being swallowed as it expands.

The parties are about to clash over the foundation's plans to build another 40 permanent dwellings on a five-acre site it has acquired adjacent to its caravan park.

The planning decision will be the first test of the new Moray Council, which comes into being on April 1. The foundation already has outline permission for five dwellings.

Leading the opposition is Sir Michael Joughin, 66, a former chairman of Scottish Hydro-Electric and now chairman of the Findhorn and Kinloss Community Council. He has lived in Morayshire for 50 years and in Findhorn, where he farms, for 15 years.

He says villagers have been ignored as the foundation expands. "They have gone from seven people in the beginning to around 500. They already have 100 permanent dwellings and have expanded into nearby Forres.



The village is in danger of being submerged. They don't get involved in village life," Sir Michael says that the foundation numbers "some pretty rum chaps among them" and has no local recruits.

Glenn Walters, press officer for the foundation, says the community has a turnover of £1 million and spends

£800,000 a year locally. He says the foundation has only 100 permanent residents at Findhorn, a figure disputed by Sir Michael.

"The foundation is an international and cosmopolitan centre in the middle of a conservative and parochial Scottish community. There will always be a degree of conflict. If we attempt to get involved with the local community we are branded as interfering. If we don't, we are isolationist."

"We are not a cult or a sect. We represent a collection of loosely held beliefs. Sir Michael Joughin does not speak for everyone in the village."

The community was founded in 1962 by Peter and Eileen Caddy, who initially lived in a battered caravan, which has since become something of a

shrine, and started growing vegetables in the thin sandy soil. The vegetables flourish, with tales of 40lb cabbages, and so did the community.

Peter Caddy, who died in a car crash two years ago at the age of 76, was an eccentric who prospered in the morally experimental climate of the Sixties. The foundation's early growth was built on Eileen's "channelings" or messages from "the God within".

From there grew a philosophy of living in tune with nature. There is no set creed or ideology and the community cheerfully embraces many different religions. It has built ecologically sound dwellings and last year hosted an international environment conference.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NHS staff seek 6.5% pay rise

Health unions are demanding a 6.5 per cent pay increase for 800,000 workers ranging from nurses and ambulance crews to porters. About 18 unions have joined forces in submitting joint local pay claims.

Restructuring has meant that there are now more than 500 employers within the NHS. The unions also want a £4.14-an-hour minimum for all staff and progress at ending short-term contracts and the use of temporary staff.

Lottery handout

The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich has received a National Lottery grant of £1.8 million towards its Neptune Court extension, a £19.6 million gallery to be completed in time for the millennium celebrations.

Princess flies out

The Princess of Wales is flying to the island of Barbuda in the Caribbean today for a holiday with Prince William and Prince Harry. They are booked into the £1,800-a-night K Club, which has relaxed its "no children" rule.

Singer chosen

The Australian-born singer Gina G was confirmed as Britain's entry to the Eurovision Song Contest with her dance number *Just a Little Bit*. Her song, co-written with the dance team Motiv8, was chosen from a field of eight.

Family reunion

A brother and sister separated 50 years ago by adoption have discovered they live in villages three miles apart in Hereford and Worcester. Peter Stanton, 58, spent 30 years searching for Jenny Fletcher, 57. Their children had been friends.

Don't sniff at our boffins, they're winning by a nose

By Nick Nuttall

SCIENTISTS have developed an artificial nose so sensitive that it can distinguish the aromas of Colombian and Brazilian coffee. The device, one of several electronic "smelling" technologies that have put Britain to the forefront of artificial nose research, is the creation of scientists at Southampton University.

It has an array of sensors linked to a computer that attempts to mimic the human nose. Dr Martin Grossel, of the university's chemistry department, said scores of uses were planned, including monitoring the health of cattle from their breath. He added:

"Companies that make anti-perspirants actually employ people to sniff armpits. This would be a better way of doing it."

The Southampton nose can distinguish between different wines and cheeses. A nose developed by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology has sniffed out truffles, outwitting a trained pig during trials. Similar sensors are used by brewers for quality control.

At the Highland Psychiatric Research Group in Craig Dunain Hospital, Inverness, scientists are trying to develop electronic noses to diagnose human diseases. Researchers have linked odours on people's breath or from sweat glands

with diseases ranging from cancer to ulcers.

Dr George Dodd, a pioneer in artificial nose research, believes that hospitals may one day have booths like telephone boxes filled with sniffing sensors. Patients would be exposed to the sensors for a few minutes and if a suspect airborne chemical were detected, the patient would be referred to a doctor for fuller tests.

Researchers at Cornell University, New York, have developed a prototype artificial mouth, a blender-like device that mashes food and detects the chemicals present. Allied to the British nose, the technology could create a robot wine-taster.



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Heaney is fêted in France

Paris Seamus Heaney, the Nobel prize-winning Irish poet, was made a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters yesterday and praised as a vital cultural link in Ireland's divided society (Ben Macintyre writes).

Presenting him with the award, Philippe Douste-Blazy, the French Culture Minister, said that Mr Heaney had "grown up between unionists and nationalists, defining himself as part of both worlds, which remain irreconcilable, a cause of split blood even now". Speaking in French, the 56-year-old poet said that when he was given the Nobel prize in December he was "walking on air". With the latest honour, "that walk continues".

"This is a sort of benediction," Mr Heaney said, adding that as the former home of Irish writers such as Oscar Wilde, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, France was "a haven for Irish artists".



Seamus Heaney laughs as the medal presented to him in Paris yesterday by Philippe Douste-Blazy falls to the floor

UN envoy urges war crimes judges to study Srebrenica evidence

Bosnia massacre confirmed

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE United Nations human rights investigator in the former Yugoslavia has confirmed that at least 3,000 Muslims were murdered by the Bosnian Serb Army after the fall of Srebrenica last year, according to a French news report.

"Recent indications tend to confirm the allegations that the Bosnian Serb forces massacred at least 3,000 Muslims [Muslims] and probably many more in the region of Srebrenica in July 1995," Elisabeth Rehn, a UN envoy, was quoted as saying in a report to be presented shortly to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

The investigator also uncovered evidence of massacres by Serb forces near Ljubija in 1992 and at Sanski Most in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina last October, according to the newspaper *La Croix*, which published extracts from the report yesterday.

However, with about 8,000 people still missing from the former UN "safe haven" of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, the report acknowledged that many questions remained un-

answered. In the 71-page report Ms Rehn, a former Finnish Defence Minister who visited Srebrenica last month, said she hoped that the war crimes tribunal at The Hague would "obtain adequate means to investigate these allegations... and will finally be able to resolve uncertainties in these areas".

The leaked report coincided with the unveiling of the first indictments against Bosnian Muslim suspects at The Hague and a visit to the site of a mass grave in Serb-held territory near Srebrenica by

Madeleine Albright, the US Ambassador to the UN.

"It's the most disgusting and horrifying sight for another human being to see," Ms Albright said after touring the site near the village of Janja. She was accompanied by an American forensic expert and Admiral Leighton Smith, the Nato peacekeeping commander in Bosnia.

The site, where Muslims from Srebrenica were allegedly transported and massacred by Bosnian Serb forces, was identified using aerial surveillance photography. The area

is one of several suspected mass graves.

The war crimes tribunal released indictments yesterday against three Bosnian Muslims and a Croat accused of murdering Bosnian Serbs at Celibici prison camp prison camp in southern Bosnia. Two of the four accused — Zdravko Mucic, who is believed to be the former camp commander, and Zejnil Delic — were

arrested in Austria and Germany respectively this week. The Bosnian Government has pledged to apprehend the remaining two men.

The tribunal has so far indicted 57 suspects, almost all Serbs, including General Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb military commander, and Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, prompting accusations that investigators were singling out Serbs for punishment while ignoring Bosnian Serb victims of the war.

In her report, Ms Rehn reportedly criticised parts of the Dayton accord, which brought more than three years of fighting to an end, arguing that the agreement paid too much attention to ethnic distinctions. "Some aspects of the accord are disturbing, notably the point which defines the eligibility for the presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina and, among other criteria, the nationality of candidates," she said.

□ Britain killed: A British soldier has been killed in a fire in his barracks in Bosnia. Lance-Corporal Chris McLeish, 24, is believed to have been crushed to death when the roof of the barracks collapsed.

Hillary Clinton flies to Tuzla

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER
IN WASHINGTON

HILLARY CLINTON, accompanied by her daughter Chelsea, 16, is flying today to Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where on Monday she will meet US troops in what critics consider an effort to improve her tarnished image. Mrs Clinton will be the first Presi-

dent's wife to visit forces in a hostile environment without her husband since Eleanor Roosevelt in the Second World War.

During the ten-day trip, the First Lady will meet President Demirel in Turkey and then travel to Greece to see the lighting of the flame for this summer's Atlanta Olympics. Aides said they hoped pic-

tures of Mrs Clinton boosting the morale of American soldiers and guiding her daughter around Europe's ancient sites would improve her standing just as did her 1995 trip to Asia with Chelsea.

Mrs Clinton has been hounded by congressional Whitewater committees, and subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury.

Tribunal names suspects

LIST OF THE 57 men accused of war crimes:

Four suspects named yesterday by the war crimes tribunal in The Hague, who include the first Muslims accused of committing atrocities, were:

Zejnil Delalic, 48; Zdravko "Pavo" Mucic, 51; Hazim Delic, 51; Ehad "Zenga" Lando, 28.

Of the remaining 53, accused of "serious violations of the Geneva Conventions", "violations of the laws or customs of war", "crimes against humanity" or "genocide", three are in custody:

Djordje Djulic, Dusko Tadic, and Goran Lajic.

The 50 others still at large are:

Zlatko Aleksovski, Mirko Babic, Nenad Banovic, Predrag Borovic, Thott (Thorn) Boskic, Goran Borovnica, Mario Carlez, Ranko Cesic, Damiir Dosen, Dragan Fustar, Zdravko Govedavica, Miroslav Gruban, (first name unknown), Gruban, Nidica Janjic, Goran Jelic, Radovan Karadzic, Dusan Knezevic, Dragan Kordic, Dario Kordic, Miroslav Koc, Predrag Kostic, Dragan Kukundzija, Miroslav Kovacka, Milan Maric, Ratko Mladic, Zeljko Meacic, Stjepan Mijovic, Milan Miroslavic, Dragan Nikolic, Nedjeljko Paspalj, Milan Pavic, Milutin Popovic, Dragoljub Prase, Draganovic, Miroslav Radic, Mladen Radic, Mica Rajic, Ivan Santic, Dragan Saponja, Zeljko Sasic, Dusko Sikirica, Biserko Simic, Milan Simic, Pero Skopljak, Vesselin Stijevic, Miroslav Tadic, Nedjeljko Timarac, Stjepan Tudorovic, Simo Zaric and Zoran Zigic. (AFP)



Mme Chirac mother of her child is a judo star

Chirac is a grandfather

Paris President Chirac became a grandfather for the first time yesterday when his unmarried daughter and close political adviser, Claude, gave birth to a boy (Ben Macintyre writes).

Despite the furor surrounding the late François Mitterrand's illegitimate daughter, *la vie privée* is considered just that, and yesterday's news merited just a few terse lines from the main news agency. Agence France-Press. Sources at the Elysée Palace confirmed that the father is Thierry Rey, world judo champion and a television sports commentator.

THE TIMES

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Yeltsin wins open support from US

FROM RICHARD BEESTON
IN MOSCOW

THE Clinton Administration dropped any pretence at impartiality in Russia's forthcoming presidential elections yesterday when Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, gave an unsolicited plug for President Yeltsin's re-election campaign.

Speaking at a press conference after meeting the Russian leader in the Kremlin, Mr Christopher left little doubt that Washington will be using all its weight to help President Yeltsin to stay in power against a strong challenge from Gennadi Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader and front-runner in the polls.

"I am sure that President Clinton will come here to follow basically the line that he has followed ever since the beginning of his presidency, and that is to support the reforms and support those who are enthusiastic about reform and those who are carrying out reforms," Mr Christopher said. "That has brought him into strong support for President Yeltsin on prior occasions."

Although there had been concerns that Mr Christopher would find himself at odds with the Kremlin over Nato's expansion plans, the Americans and Russians clearly decided to put their differences on hold for the time being. Instead, the two sides concentrated on areas of agreement, such as fighting terrorism, pursuing arms control deals and laying the groundwork for a summit, planned for Moscow next month, of the G7 group of industrialised nations to discuss nuclear safety.

Mr Christopher's words of support came after similar remarks made in Moscow recently by Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, and the pro-Yeltsin Chirac Government in France. Although President Yeltsin is trailing Mr Zyuganov in the polls, Western powers appear to have decided to back him as long as he remains in office.

Nevertheless, the Americans have kept their channels open to the Communist leadership and last night Mr Christopher was hosting a dinner at the American Ambassador's residence for several leading Russian politicians, including Mr Zyuganov.

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Pentagon calls off untimely trip to Washington by Communist Defence Minister

China-America rift widens as Taiwan prepares to vote

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN PEKING AND TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE presence of two American aircraft carrier groups off Taiwan — with the USS *Nimitz* expected to arrive this weekend — has complicated Peking's calculations in the crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Although neither China nor the United States are seeking a direct confrontation, their relations plummeted further last night after the scheduled visit to Washington by the Chinese Defence Minister was postponed. In a sign of the steady decline in dialogue between the two sides, both claimed to have made the decision to suspend next month's visit by General Chi Haotian, who was to have toured US military installations.

The Pentagon said that William Perry, the Defence Secretary, had determined that "a large-scale official visit was not appropriate in the present climate". China's Xinhua news agency also took the same line.

The worsening relations come as Taiwanese voters go to the polls today to take part in the first-ever direct presidential election, about which few mainland Chinese have any information.

Communist China has imposed a news blackout and its media have only been reporting Peking's vitriolic denunciation of Lee Teng-hui, the incumbent Taiwanese President.

China is also continuing with its military exercises in

WAR GAMES

the northwest section of the Strait, close to Taiwan's outlying islands, although poor weather has forced it to scale back the war games, not due to end until Monday.

The military manoeuvres are designed to put pressure on Taiwanese voters not to back Mr Lee, whom Peking

king had not expected Washington to respond so strongly to Chinese threats towards Taiwan, because President Clinton in 1994 severed the connection between China's most favoured nation status and progress on human rights and related issues. Since then, Peking has thumbed its nose at Washington.

"China was getting used to having its own way and was surprised by the strength of American reaction," one envoy said yesterday. "This upset their plans, and they have had to take the factor of strong American counter-measures into their calculations."

He said China would keep its options open after the election, but there were likely to be more "routine" military exercises in the Taiwan Strait.

"This issue is not going to go away," the envoy added.

At the same time, Peking is likely to resume links with Taipei which has about 100,000 businessmen operating in China.

Shen Guofang, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, indicated in his regular news briefing on Thursday that China would be able to resume contacts with whoever won the presidential elections — presumably, including Mr Lee — provided he ceased his perceived push for independence. He emphasised that there should be no confrontation between Chinese people.

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Taiwanese soldiers on alert on Matsui, an island ten miles from mainland China

Communist media have not reported on the substance of Taiwan's election, even though it is the first time in 5,000 years that Chinese voters have had the luxury of

picking a president from among four candidates.

One Chinese matron here said: "I have been able to listen to [President] Lee on short-wave radio. Otherwise I

would have had no idea, from reading the Peking newspapers, of what the election was all about."

Island nation, page 22

Lee throws down gauntlet to Peking on eve of poll

FROM DAVID WATTS AND JONATHAN MIRSKEY IN TAIPEI

PRESIDENT Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan made Peking an offer it could only refuse: "We want China unified — is freedom and democracy." Since Mr Lee is certain to be re-elected as President today, his suggestion that if Peking wants to talk, it must become democratic, will enrage Chinese leaders.

UNIFICATION

Mr Lee said that Taiwan's economic and political miracles had come about during years "in the shadow of war". Mr Lee's Mandarin runs a poor third behind his native Taiwanese dialect and the Japanese he learnt during the war. However, his message was plain: "No matter what the other side has done, it has not disturbed our minds and it has

concentrated our strength. And we have achieved political reform without bloodshed."

Lien Chan, Mr Lee's running-mate and present Prime Minister, looked forward in terms Peking will find more promising. Negotiations must begin as soon as possible, he said. The foundation must be small, non-governmental or neo-governmental agencies that discuss matters such as shipping links. Mr Lien hinted that a peace treaty would

solve many problems. Earlier, Peng Ming-min, presidential candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party and Mr Lee's most dangerous opponent, made not the slightest gesture towards reunification. Mr Peng is the champion of those who say that ethnicity aside, Taiwanese are not Chinese. There is no need to proclaim *de jure* independence, he says, because independence has been a fact for decades.

He also made offers to Peking,

however. "Because we make no ridiculous, suicidal claims to rule Tibet and Mongolia," Mr Peng said, "we would be the friendliest neighbour China ever had. We have much to offer them."

Antonio Chiang, one of Taiwan's most perceptive commentators, said yesterday that, despite their differences, Mr Lee and Mr Peng represented the mainline position here that Taiwan must stand up to Peking's pressure.

Six miles proves to be too far for peace

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKEY IN QUEMOY

TWO days ago Chen Siyang and five other county councillors from Quemoy decided to visit Xiamen, just six miles across the narrow Taiwan Strait which separates them from mainland China.

They wanted to explain to their Chinese neighbours, who once regularly shelled their island, that they wanted peace. However, they were firmly rebuffed and Mr Chen now says: "Everyone on this little island sees what a bully China really is."

To travel six miles — the mainland is clearly visible from their island — Mr Chen and his colleagues first had to fly to Hong Kong via Taipei, and then to Xiamen.

"We knew our island was in the front line," said Ouyang Yimou, another councillor. "So we thought we could talk about peace in Xiamen. But when we got there they said it was not the right time, we

EMBOYS

were not high-ranking enough, and maybe we could come back after the election [being held today]."

Mr Chen said: "We never thought they'd turn us away. This wasn't an act. We wanted to show them Quemoy's love of peace. What we got was cruel, ruthless behaviour."

Many of the fields here are studded with tall cement columns topped with sharp metal points, intended to impale mainland paratroops. Towers stand at crossroads with soldiers on top manning anti-aircraft machineguns. Tanks stand under trees. Soldiers from the 30,000-man garrison are digging trenches in the red clay and there are hundreds of miles of tunnels crisscrossing the island in which troops can shelter for months. Yesterday the island was on readiness three, two down from full-scale war.

The island is dotted with memorials to the soldiers and civilians who endured the artillery bombardment from the mainland in 1958.

WORLD SUMMARY

Hardliner to manage Sweden

Goran Persson, who took over yesterday as Swedish Prime Minister, signalled his aim to continue tough austerity measures by appointing as Finance Minister Erik Asbrink, a hardliner who has criticised Sweden's high taxes (Michael Binyon writes).

Mr Asbrink takes over as Sweden is struggling to reverse a 13 per cent budget deficit, qualify for European monetary union, and cut 12 per cent unemployment.

In a Times interview last week, Mr Asbrink admitted the passing of the old "Swedish model" of social welfare. "People know there is no way back."

Yeltsin in talks on Belorussia

Moscow: Russia and Belorussia came closer to reunification yesterday after the countries' leaders met to discuss terms for a union treaty (Richard Beeson writes).

In a move that could bolster President Yeltsin's popularity before presidential elections in June, he met President Lukashenko in the Kremlin. Opposition MPs have condemned the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Russians step up Chechen assault

Moscow: Russian troops backed by artillery and warplanes stepped up their assault on rebel positions in southern Chechnya, in a move that has claimed hundreds of casualties (Richard Beeson writes). Moscow said 28 soldiers had been killed and 86 injured. Chechen figures were unavailable.

Greeks defend airport security

Athens: Greek authorities rejected claims by the US Transport Department that state-run Athens airport did not meet acceptable security standards (John Carr writes). Athens is anxious not to disrupt its lucrative tourist trade.

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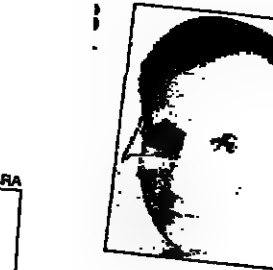


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Mandela urges halt to KwaZulu violence

FROM INIGO GILMORE IN JOHANNESBURG

PRESIDENT MANDELA yesterday called for a new strategy to combat political violence in KwaZulu/Natal after the massacre of 11 people highlighted the fragility of recent peace initiatives in the province.

Gunmen attacked two rural homesteads in Donnybrook on Thursday night, shooting dead seven women and three men. A two-month-old baby died after being smothered by one of the victims.

Police have confirmed the motive for the attack was political: all ten adults were supporters of the African National Congress. Since the mid-1980s, members of the Zulu-dominated Inkatha Freedom Party and ANC have fought a war in the province,

leaving at least 15,000 dead. Levels of political violence dropped after the first democratic elections in 1994 but have risen again recently.

Observers have noted the connection between political events and political violence. The massacre in Donnybrook occurred a few hours after Mr Mandela launched the ANC's campaign for the May local government elections in the province. The polls had to be postponed last November because of disputes over district boundaries, and the latest killings may be a foretaste of violence in the run-up to the elections.

The ANC yesterday called for more troops to be sent to the province. The party has pointed fingers at Inkatha and Zulu traditional chiefs, suggest-

ing a political strategy under way to disrupt the election. An Inkatha spokesman said the province could expect trouble from both sides.

While security efforts have made important strides in advancing the peace campaign, on a political level the picture is not rosy. A week ago, Mr Mandela was booed by the province's chiefs when he suggested at a meeting that Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Inkatha leader, should not be elevated above the Zulu King. Plans to set a date for broader peace talks fell by the wayside as the two sides failed to find common ground.

Inkatha has recently made efforts to undermine the influence of King Goodwill Zwelithini. Chief Buthelezi, who wants virtual autonomy for KwaZulu/Natal, draws much of his support from powerful tribal chiefs.

Last April he stormed out of negotiations over the constitution, and often uses language that critics say incites violence. Behind this lies Inkatha's concerns that the ANC is making inroads in the province, particularly among the less traditionalist youth.

President Mandela announced yesterday that he had met his ministers of Safety and Security, Justice and Defence to consider a new strategy to deal with violence.

Police reject plot claim

Johannesburg: Political analysts have expressed scepticism over a claim by President Mandela that elements within the police force were planning to overthrow his ANC-led Government (Inigo Gilmore writes).

At a rally in KwaZulu/Natal, where the ANC launched its campaign for May's local government elections, Mr Mandela said there was still a tendency among different

population groups to think in terms of race. "We still have powerful elements in this country planning every day to overthrow this Government," he said.

Police Commissioner George Fivaz said it was inconceivable that the post-apartheid force could seek to overthrow the Government. The new force was "absolutely committed to the new democratic order".



Paul Keating, left, the former Labor Prime Minister of Australia, shows his conservative successor, John Howard, around the Lodge in Canberra, the official prime ministerial residence, before moving out

Villagers rescue Briton in Somalia

BY JAMES BONE

A BRITON and four colleagues abducted in Somalia were freed by armed local villagers who heard about the kidnapping on the BBC World Service, United Nations officials said yesterday.

William Condie, a Unicef security officer from Hereford, was seized with four UN officials from Nepal, India, Sudan and America while waiting for a flight out of Somalia on Thursday.

The UN team, which was making its weekly three-day visit to the war-torn country, was surrounded by about ten armed men at the Balidogle airport, 56 miles southwest of Mogadishu. UN sources say the kidnappers were led by a disgruntled contractor named Omar Dini Hosh, from whom Unicef had hired vehicles. The UN agency cancelled the car-hire contract last week after paying off Mr Hosh. He decided that he wanted more compensation and abducted the UN team in retaliation.

The area around the Balidogle airport, now Somalia's principal port of entry, is controlled by General Muhammad Farrah Aidid, the warlord who led an uprising against UN peacekeepers in 1993 and effectively forced them out of the country.

As soon as the local authorities heard of the kidnapping, they called for residents to intercept the armed men and free the UN staff. The people of a village about 20 miles from the town of Qoryoley heard about the incident on a BBC radio broadcast and set out to save Mr Condie and his companions.

At least one boy was wounded in the ensuing gun battle late on Thursday, but the five UN staff were rescued unharmed. They spent the night in a UN vehicle that had set out to find them and were expected to return to Nairobi tomorrow.

Those abducted with Mr Condie were Ismail el-Azhari, Nasim Ahmed, Dean Kapile and Robert Hagan.

Israeli sues false prophet of spring

BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

AN ISRAELI mother of three is suing the country's leading television weatherman for an inaccurate forecast that she alleges caused her to catch flu. She says that she dressed too lightly after hearing his assurances of rising temperatures.

"The case is, as far as I know, without any precedent here and is certain to provoke intense interest," said David Saville, a leading English-born Israeli lawyer. "My guess is that the plaintiff will probably lose on the ground that the forecast was a prediction rather than a cast-iron prophecy."

The disgruntled Haifa resident filed her petition in the Small Claims Court after Danny Roup, the award-winning weatherman on Israel's Channel 2 Television, predicted on a clear evening recently that the next day would be spring-like and sunny.

The plaintiff dressed in light clothes. The weather turned out to be wet and wintry, however, causing the woman to come down with flu, miss several days of work and forcing her to spend money on what she claimed in her petition was expensive medicine.

She blamed Mr Roup and is demanding £640 for missed days of work and mental anguish. She is also claiming for the cost of the medicine and wants Mr Roup to make a public apology.

"The Small Claims Court is attached to the 'Peace Court', the magistrates' system which is based on British law," Mr Saville said. "The Israelis are about the most litigious race, per head of population, on Earth — but this is the first time that I have heard of anyone suing a TV weather forecaster."

Britain frees Kenya aid

FROM SAM KILEY IN NAIROBI

KENYA yesterday ended its pariah status among donor nations as Britain gave its seal of approval for Nairobi's economic recovery plan and released £5 million in aid that had been frozen since 1994.

Britain's approval is likely to encourage other donors to release £385 million, also pledged in 1994, to help Nairobi soften the blow of a World Bank economic restructuring programme.

The seven biggest donors, including Britain, met Kenyan officials in Paris yesterday. Donors have been concerned that President Moi would renege on pledges to liberalise the economy. Moreover, about £327 million in aid money vanished from the treasury.

The current plan calls for privatisation of state-owned companies, civil service cuts and an anti-corruption drive.

The country has got to the stage where patients are sleeping three to a bed in hospitals without drugs and schools are short of books.

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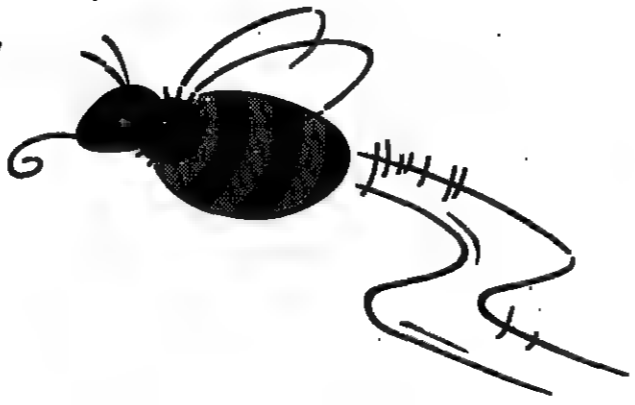
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Jackson mobilises protests against Oscars 'race bias'

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

JESSE JACKSON, the civil rights activist, is planning demonstrations in cities across America during Monday's broadcast of the Oscars ceremony to draw attention to the fact that only one of the 166 Academy Award nominees is black.

Taking his cue from an 11-page report in last week's *People* magazine accusing Hollywood of "institutionalised racism", Mr Jackson held long meetings with show business leaders on Thursday, threatening to picket television stations that will be broadcasting the Oscars ceremony.

The report came as a severe embarrassment to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which administers the awards and considers itself a paragon of political correctness and public relations knowhow. Blacks make up 9 per cent of the American population and, as enthusiastic filmgoers, 25 per cent of the nation's cinema audience. However, fewer than 200, or 3.9 per cent, of the 5,043 academy members who vote on the Oscars, are African-American, the magazine found.

Mr Jackson, apparently unaware of the discrepancy until the article was published, has leapt into the fray with vigour. "It doesn't stand to reason that if you are forced to the



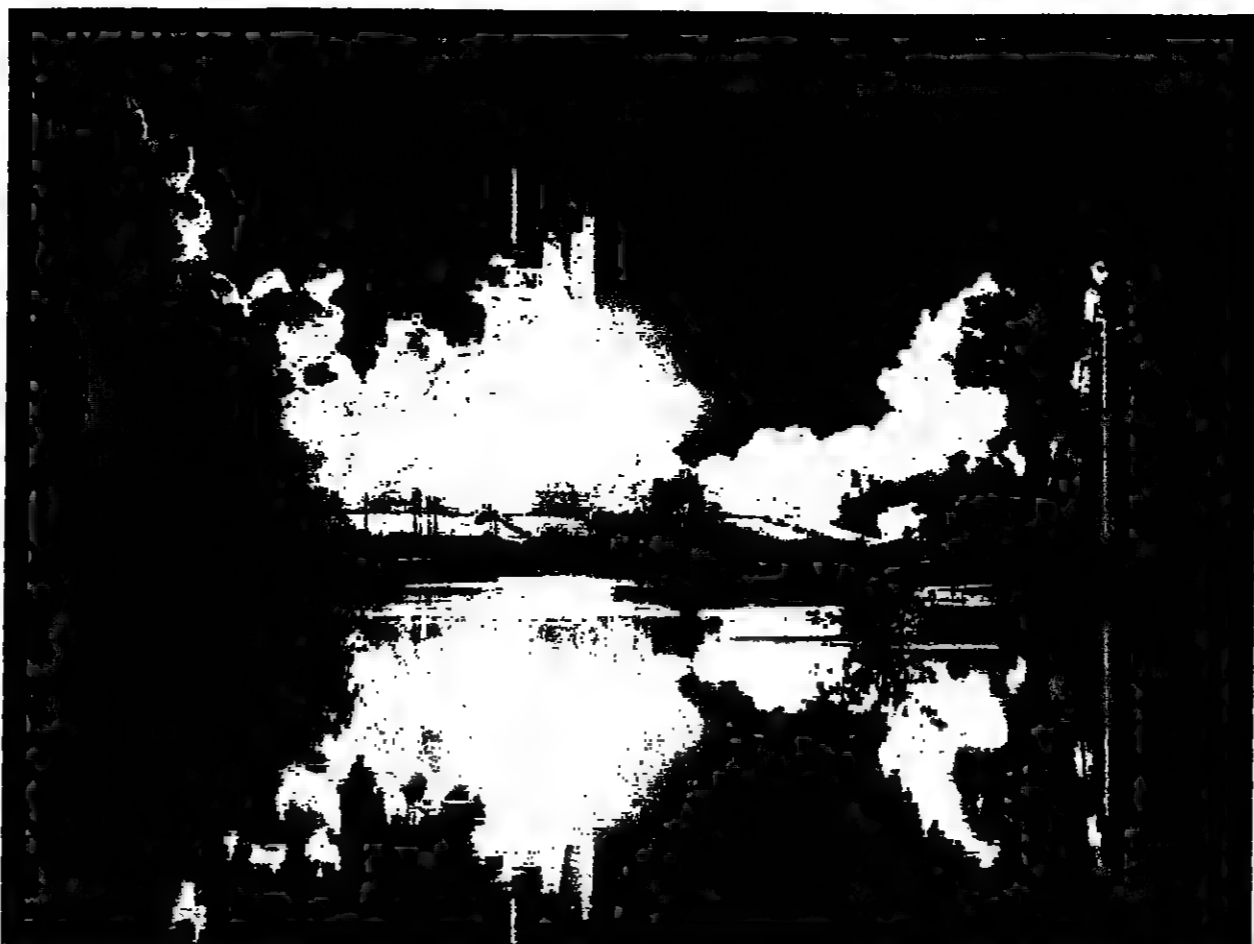
Jackson: met show business leaders

as master of ceremonies after David Letterman's widely criticised performance last year. Ms Winfrey, the talkshow host, will announce the nominees' arrival to a worldwide television audience of about a billion.

Notable performances by blacks which Mr Jackson and others claim the academy has ignored unfairly include those by Angela Bassett and Whitney Houston in *Waiting to Exhale* and Denzel Washington's role as a private eye in postwar Los Angeles in *Devil in a Blue Dress*.

□ New York: Records are being set for television advertising on this year's Oscar awards broadcast.

ABC television charging \$795,000 (£518,000) for a 30-second spot during the programme, the network said Friday. Advertising for the presentation, which is all sold, fetched 16 per cent more in revenue than last year. (APF)



Space shuttle *Atlantis* lifts off from Cape Canaveral to dock with the Russian station *Mir*. Soon after take-off yesterday, the crew said there was loss of pressure

Atlantis begins voyage to Mir

because of a leak in the hydraulics. The setback will not affect the docking, due to occur today, to let Shannon Lucid join *Mir*, where she is to stay for five months. If the leak shortens the ten-day trip, it will be a further embarrassment for Nasa after last month's mishap when a satellite was lost as its tether snapped. (Reuter)

First Lady replies to inquiry on sackings

BY MARTIN FLETCHER

HILLARY CLINTON yesterday released carefully worded answers to 26 questions posed by congressmen investigating the dismissal in 1993 of the seven-member White House Travel Office.

In sworn testimony that contradicted a series of subpoenaed White House memorandums, she insisted that she had "no decision-making role" in the dismissals. She repeatedly claimed an inability to recall particular conversations during what she called a "busy and stressful time", and several times suggested that aides had misconstrued her remarks about the Travel Office. The White House released the answers just too late to be covered in Thursday's evening news.

Six of the seven employees were reinstated. The seventh was tried for fraud but acquitted. Evidence later emerged to suggest that an old Arkansas friend of the Clintons had pushed for the dismissals because he wanted the Travel Office business.

New York dog's life is envy of the poor

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

NEW YORKERS spend as much on their pet dogs as the average Third World country gains from its trade exports. New figures suggest that the Manhattan dog lover last year paid more than \$5,000 (£3,200) each on Butch, generating \$1 billion in business for the pet trade and matching the foreign trade earnings of Guatemala.

The minimum annual cost of keeping a dog in New York was estimated by the American Kennel Club yesterday at \$1,250, which covered food, veterinary bills, grooming, basic training and treats (bedding, toys, chocolate drops and fashion items).

Few owners do without the services of a dog walker, who exercises your pet while you are at work. At \$15 a day, five times a week for 50 weeks a year, this added \$3,750.

On top of these costs can be added the price of kennelling dogs during holidays, sub-

scriptions to pet magazines such as *Dogue* and *Vanity Fur*, entry fees for social events such as next month's 1,500-dog "pooch picnic", plus the expense of proper training.

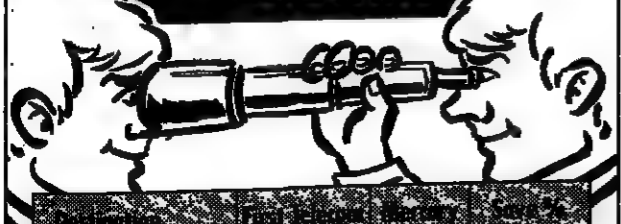
Bashkim Dibra, a self-styled "dog trainer to the stars", said yesterday that he had known New Yorkers who had spent more than \$15,000 on educating a dog.

Mr Dibra, whose clients have included the hounds of the actresses Kim Basinger and Kathleen Turner, said: "Dog ownership is all about four-legged therapy. In a city like New York you need unconditional love, and that is what dogs provide."

Robin Holik, of the American Kennel Club, said that, as with other household essentials, dog food and veterinarians cost more in New York. Animal behaviourists in central Manhattan charge as much as \$500 an hour.



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oved the tree

Money d by irthworth

Two of late President's confidants move on to bright new careers in acting and writing

Tapie, star of film and trial

BERNARD TAPIE, the bankrupt former owner of Marseilles football team, is now starring in two very different productions: the first is a film by Claude Lelouch, the director, due for release this summer; the second is taking place in a French courtroom where the flamboyant former Cabinet minister stands accused of fraud.

M. Tapie's trial began this week in Béthune and the quality of his court performance may decide whether he watches the premiere of his debut film as a free man or behind bars.

Like everything associated with the former singer, second-hand car salesman, politician, football boss, millionaire and now film actor,

PARIS FILE
by BEN
MACINTYRE



the charges against M. Tapie are on a lavish, even garish scale.

Prosecutors say M. Tapie, who is a member of the French and European parliaments, siphoned off up to Fr100 million (about £13 million) from a scale-manufacturing company he bought in 1983. The money allegedly was used to pay off his personal debts, fund an election campaign for an asso-

ciate and recruit players for the Olympique Marseilles team.

A protégé of François Mitterrand and once a rising star of the Left, M. Tapie already has an eight-month sentence hanging over him for match rigging.

He faces up to five more years in prison if convicted on the present charges, his financial empire is in ruins, the tax man is demanding more than

Fr66 million (£8.5 million) in connection with his luxury yacht, and another case is pending over the accounts of the Marseilles team. Creditors have even stripped his mansion of its furniture.

A different man might buckle under that litany of disaster, but that is not M. Tapie's way. "I have replaced my passion for football with a passion for film," M. Tapie announced breezily as he strode into court this week. "I shall soon star in another movie."

His latest reincarnation, as the star of *Men, Women, Operating Instructions*, in which he plays an overstressed lawyer, has merely compounded the Tapie myth of invincibility and he was awarded the full star treatment by the French press when he completed filming, just days before his latest trial began.

Lelouch, enthused over his unlikely leading man, insisting that "with regard to Tapie, there is one thing on which everyone agrees, his incomparable acting talents. He's a born actor."

could use the company washrooms just three times a day, for five minutes each, at specified hours. Anyone disobeying would be fined Fr50 (£6.50). The workers promptly stopped work.

Last week the "Conseil des prud'hommes" ruled that workers could answer the call of nature whenever they wanted, having first told a supervisor. "Aux toilettes, citoyens!"

Tribunal gives a oui for liberty

THE freedom to go to the lavatory is nowhere enshrined in the French constitution, but it is a right, according to a ruling by a French labour tribunal.

A bitter battle over "les pauses-pipi" erupted at Bigard, a Breton meat factory, after bosses insisted last July that the 300 employees were abusing lavatorial liberty and henceforth

BALTIQUE

ABOITIR

Seuf années dans les secrets de François Mitterrand



Baltique and her old friend adorn the cover of "her story"

Baltique bitches on about life in the Elysée

BALTIQUE, the black Labrador owned by the late François Mitterrand, was seen by millions of television viewers as she faithfully accompanied the funeral cortege of her master in January.

Now, like the wife, the doctor and most other people associated with the former Socialist President, Baltique has rushed into print with a memoir of life *chez Mitterrand* from the canine perspective.

Unlike the whimsical memoirs of Millie the White House dog, whose work outsold that of her master, George Bush, mostly because it was more interesting, Baltique's style is "particularly biting", according to the book's publishers, Hachette-Carrère, not to say fairly bitchy.

In *Abotir* 1, a play on the French word for "bark", Baltique recalls that Mme Mitterrand was not overly fond of her, a claim that appears to be substantiated by the fact that since Mitterrand's death the dog has been relegated to a police station at an undisclosed location while the President's widow promotes her own book. Baltique has no plans to go walkies on a publicity tour, the publishers say.

Clearly written by an insider at the Elysée, *Abotir* 1, published on Thursday with an initial print run of 50,000 copies, covers Baltique's nine years as the President's dog, dwelling in particular depth on Mitterrand's relationship with Anne Pingeot, his mistress, and their illegitimate daughter Mazarine.

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Steamy trailer ban puts 'Last Tango' director in a spin

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

THE film director Bernardo Bertolucci, whose *Last Tango in Paris* was banned in Italy 20 years ago, has again fallen foul of the censors, this time over a tale of adolescent seduction in Chianti.

State television announced yesterday that it was refusing to show advertisements for Bertolucci's latest film, *I Dance Alone*, starring the American actress Liv Ullmann. Set in Tuscany, the film revolves around the seduction of the 18-year-old Ullmann by an older man, played by Jeremy Irons, at an English-owned villa near Siena.

In the scene which gives the film its title, Ullmann dyes naked into the pool and calls out to Ullmann: "Haven't you ever made love?" to which she replies: "I dance alone."

The film will be released in Italy next week, and is to be shown at the next Cannes Film Festival. But a spokesman for RAI, the state-run television network, said the trailer was "too hot to handle", even for the late evening. An infuriated Bertolucci said he would leave Italy altogether. He was "deeply bewildered and dismayed", not least because the Italian Board of Censors had praised the film on first viewing for "the delicacy with which it portrayed the young heroine's sexual initiation".

Bertolucci said the row revived painful memories of his "suffering and humiliation" over *Last Tango in Paris*, when he was given a two-month suspended prison sentence and deprived of the right to vote for five years. The refusal to advertise was absurd given that no one from RAI had seen the film.

Italian television authorities are tightening up on



Ullmann: seduced in the film by Jeremy Irons

standards after a row this week over a bizarre commercial for Volkswagen. The advert showed an elderly man running a pocket knife along the side of a smart red Golf.

Pierangelo Sardi, the head of the Italian Psychologists' Association, said it was beyond belief that an act of vandalism was used to sell cars when it was far more likely to encourage street crime.

The Pope has also stepped into the controversy over television standards, urging Catholics not to watch television at all if possible during Lent because too many images were "degrading to women" and otherwise encouraged debased values.

The Vatican said that the Pope would take the offensive during Holy Week by producing a 45-second "commercial" of his own depicting him reciting the rosary in Latin.

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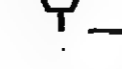
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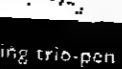
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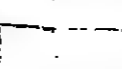
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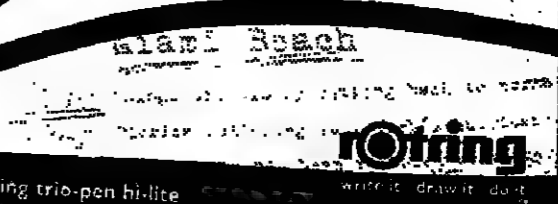


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■ OPINION

Could being chairman of the Royal Opera House be the ghastliest job in London?

■ THEATRE

Wonderful passion, pity about the diction: Isabelle Huppert makes her mark in Schiller's *Mary Stuart*

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ CHOICE

From Marianne Faithfull to *Arabella*, our critics choose the week's hot tickets: Weekend, page 2

■ RECORDS

Tippett's string quartets; Gibson in *Braveheart*: CDs and videos reviewed in Weekend, page 8

Not often do I feel sorry for anybody called Gummer. But I must put in a feelingful word for dear Peter Gummer, brother of our burger-munching Environment Secretary, John. This week, Peter was appointed chairman of the Royal Opera House, and has received a distinctly snuffy press for his pains. This is chiefly because, as Covent Garden's boss, he will be spending the very same lottery dosh (£55 million to be exact, plus the odd £20 million of "excess") that he awarded to the Royal Opera House development last year, when he headed the Arts Council's lottery panel.

Should we be worried by this? Indeed. There is clearly a deplorable shortage of Gummerts to fill Britain's top jobs. More must be brought into operation as soon as possible.

But as for the little-tattle of troublemakers who claim Gummer's appointment to be another instance of an Establishment

Now here's a test of public relations

carve-up — well, what paranoid nonsense! If Gummer feels any conflict of interests at all, it will surely be with his other job. As boss of the big PR firm, Shandwick, he probably works on the assumption that good publicity is preferable to bad. At Covent Garden, of course, they operate on the opposite principle.

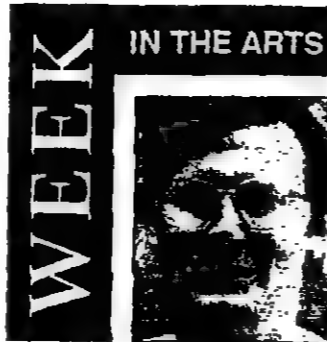
Gummer may also find that he has inherited the ghastliest job in London. Let us consider what he has to do if the ill-fated opera house development is finally to rise from the drawing-board. First he has to tie up a number of tiny but nevertheless irritating loose ends in the ROH's planning application, which seems to be progressing with all the speed of a snail through treacle.

Then he must warm up to the richest people in London — the

Gettys, the Rothschilds, the Sainsburys, and of course the Morrisons — and sweet-talk them out of the £50 million of private funding that he needs to proceed with the development. Then he must find a way of sacking half the orchestra, the opera chorus and most of the stage hands in such a way that the rest don't walk out in sympathy — because he needs at least some staff to maintain a semblance of activity during closure.

Always assuming, of course, that he has found a temporary venue in which the skeleton opera company can perform. The ROH board has had about ten years to think about this one, so it clearly has a brilliant scheme all worked out... it just doesn't want to tell anybody what the plan is yet.

Then comes the really exciting



RICHARD MORRISON

bit. Gummer must don his hard hat, put on his gruffest "don't mess with me, sonny" voice, and talk deadlines and penalty clauses with the gentlemen of the building

trade. If he manages to get the ROH development up and running within five years of its estimated finishing date, he will be doing considerably better than the last two culture palaces built in London: the Barbican Centre (ten years late) and the British Library (your guess is as good as mine).

Meanwhile, of course, he will need to find tenants for all the retail outlets and office space that the ROH must rent out if it is to pay off the remaining £50 million cost of the scheme. Tricky? Well, let's put it this way: if offered the choice I would rather try selling British beef in Paris. But come the hour, come the Gummer. I am sure that the words "fall-guy" or "poisoned chalice" have never entered his mind.

In return, he receives no salary and won't even be able to run up

an enormous champagne account in the Crush Bar, because the theatre will be closed. But there will be one deeply satisfying perk. As chairman, he can be thoroughly unpleasant to Mr Keith Cooper, the ROH's "director of corporate affairs", whose views on the shortcomings of his own colleagues are now so well known to BBC TV viewers. The joy of putting "beastly Keithy" through the mangle will surely compensate for all the other hassles of the job.

Britain's public libraries want to celebrate the millennium — and, incidentally, their own 150th anniversary — by putting an Internet terminal in every library by the year 2000. To this end the Library Association this week submitted a £45 million bid for lottery money, and a cheery

PR lady from the LA has written to me asking if I would consider doing an article about "the role of librarians as information navigators for the new century". Gosh. Beam me up, Lord Jenkins, as we say in the Reading Room at the BM.

I have no objection to my local library wiring itself to the information superhighway. The people of Hendon have long been clamouring for an efficient means of exchanging Robin Williams fanclub e-mail with the citizens of Wisconsin. I just wonder where in the library they are going to put the terminal — what with the video checkout, the coffee bar, the man selling stamps, the council-tax arrears advice desk, the passport photo booth, the bouncy castle, and of course the babysitting bureau. The only answer is to get rid of all those shelves of dusty old things with boring print inside. What did they used to be called? Hang on, I'll consult an information navigator.

Queenly quarrels with an acute accent

Is the reason Schiller's great play is so seldom performed in the nation where it occurs that it subverts English preconceptions of the warring queens at its core? Certainly, Anna Massey's determination to do justice to the complexities of Elizabeth I cannot disguise the

fact that the mighty monarch has been transformed into a blend of Herod and Pontius Pilate, only more scheming, vacillating, hypocritical and, of course, female. And certainly Schiller's romantic sympathy for a fettered body and unfettered spirit turns Mary Stuart into — but what?

If you read the play, you cannot doubt that Mary is far more of a heroine than, say, her counterpart in Robert Bolt's retelling of the story in *Vivat, Vivat Reginald*. But this is a conclusion hard to reach at the National, and for a most banal reason. A French actress, Isabelle Huppert, plays

the part, and she simply cannot cope with Jeremy Sams's graceless translation. Mary Stuart, who came to Scotland from France in 1561 and lived in Britain for 25 years, speaks our language half as comprehensibly as the French ambassador.

That was scarcely Schiller's aim, though he did take liberties with the facts. As Stephen Spender pointed out, the play is a poetic myth that happens to involve British historical characters. The wonderful scene at its centre, in which Elizabeth and Mary meet and quarrel, never occurred. But it does not quite occur at the National either, for Huppert rises to a climax in which words such as "bestard" and "impostor" flash out of a rush of dropped vowels and blurred syllables, like lamps in an engulfing fog.

Importing Huppert was a bold act, and there are times when the risk comes off. Though her habit of pointing her finger or punching the air suggests weakness, not majesty, the ample gestures and full-blooded movements of French tradition contrast tellingly with the upright body-language of Elizabeth's court. Even if you cannot always understand her, and her emotions sometimes seem external, Mary emerges as generous and outgoing, freer in her cage at Fotheringhay than Elizabeth in her palace, which is the very comparison Schiller wanted.

The evening's big success is undoubtedly Massey's Virgin Queen, who spends it wanting and encouraging Mary's death, yet trying to offload responsibility for it on anything and anyone. But is she merely a Nero who wants to be thought an Augustus, as Schiller seems to suggest? Massey's answer is yes and no. She also exudes melancholy and yearning for love,

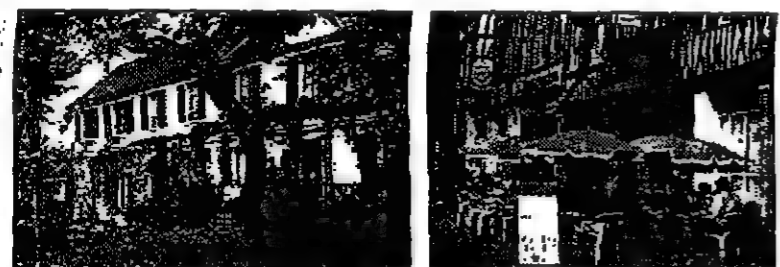
Royal rumpus: Isabelle Huppert as Mary Stuart confronts Anna Massey as Elizabeth I in Schiller's *Mary Stuart*

plus a sardonic anger, very modern yet justified by the text, at a world that seems to demand she be woman, wife, man and tyrant all at once.

Massey begins by looking like the Elizabeth in the National Portrait Gallery, pale and flame-haired in her jewelled finery, and ends crouched on her throne, sour, wizened and alone. This is the final image of the play, which is just as well, for the execution preceding it is an anticlimax. We should feel that Mary's frank confession contrasts eloquently with Elizabeth's moral shilly-shallying, and we should be moved by her death. But how can a spectator let his feelings go when he is struggling to make sense of Esperanto?

The mood-music is a mistake and so, on the whole, is William Dudley's set, which shunts Claude Landscapes and odd geometric patterns round the stage. There are effective supporting performances from Paul Jesson as an implacable Burleigh, Ben Miles as a Stern and Drang hero who wants simultaneously to rape and rescue Mary, and (especially) Tim Pigot-Smith as a city-slicker Leicester, but Howard Davies's production lacks urgency. Where is the excitement of ideas, politics and raw human conflict? Nowhere much.

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THE TIMES
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There is also a visit to Gailion with its renaissance castle and the Gaillard Chateau at Les Andelys, built by Richard the Lionheart, plus a trip to a local calvados producer.

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VISUAL ART

A gem of a show: the British Museum celebrates the collecting genius of Sir William Hamilton



MUSIC

Choirmaster's farewell: Sir David Willcocks announces his retirement from the Bach Choir

THE TIMES ARTS



BASE NOTES

The Kirov ballerina Altmayr Asymuratova flies to Britain to pick up a dance award...



BASE NOTES

...while Lord Menuhin, who turns 80 next month, receives a special award

BASE NOTES

SOME of the most famous names in the world of music and dance were honoured this week at the Evening Standard Awards. The pianist Alfred Brendel, the soprano Anja Silja and the Kirov ballerina Altmayr Asymuratova all won awards for outstanding performances in Britain in 1995. The top prize for a dance production went to Siobhan Davies's *Art of Touch*, and the chosen opera production was Graham Vick's *King Arthur* at Covent Garden. For the second year in a row, the London Symphony Orchestra was named best music ensemble, and Lord Menuhin received a special award.

ASPIRING actors are preparing to tread the boards at the 41st National Student Drama Festival, which takes place in Scarborough from Wednesday to April 3. The festival includes 17 productions as well as countless workshops and masterclasses — all under the patronage of playwright Alan Ayckbourn.

The organisers claim that their festival has helped more than 600 students, from Alan Yemob to Ben Elton, into the entertainment world. It pays tribute, once again, to Buzz Goodbody, the first female director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, who died in 1975 just after directing Ben Kingsley in *Hamlet*. She was plucked from obscurity at the 1966 National Student Festival: her talent was noticed by John Barton, who invited her to be his assistant at the RSC.

Apart from the annual award in her name, for the most outstanding young director, this year's festival will promote a new award in her memory: Queenswood, a leading independent girls' school in Hertfordshire, will launch a Buzz Goodbody Fellowship, to enable a talented young director to work at the school for a year. In return for free board, lodging and an honorarium, he or she will help to develop drama at the school, including producing a play.

All events are open to non-students. Festival box office: 01723 365068 or, until tomorrow, 01782 749049.

At the British Museum, Isabel Carlisle is captivated by Sir William Hamilton

The collector's collector

Sometimes, although rarely and unpredictably, an exhibition achieves a dynamism of its own that makes it not just good but great. That this mysterious chemistry should be present in the British Museum's current exhibition on Sir William Hamilton is surprising but palpably true. I could analyse at length the factors that have brought this about: the infectious enthusiasm of the curators; their appetite for detective work; the high quality of the loans; the lack of inhibitions in mixing ideas with exhibits, science with art; the character of Sir William himself; and an installation that evokes the late 18th century in an entirely unpompous way, are all contributing factors. Much better just to go and experience for yourself this beguiling and stimulating gem of a show.

Sir William Hamilton took up the post of British envoy at the court of the Bourbon King Ferdinand IV of Naples in 1764 without any great ambitions for a diplomatic career. Lacking fortune or tide, he concentrated instead on establishing a reputation for himself as a man of "virtu" through collecting art and antiquities, publishing his collections, entertaining the many Grand Tourists and artists passing through Naples and minutely recording the activities of Vesuvius for the Royal Society.

Vesuvius was more active in the second half of the 18th century than at any time since antiquity or afterwards and Sir William was near by for the three violent eruptions of 1767, 1779 and 1794. The evocative scenes that he commissioned from local artists convey the drama of the pall of smoke by day and the glowing orange of the night sky.

Despite the volcano, there can hardly have been a more pleasant place to live: the Bay of Naples was still one of the



Vesuvius's fury unleashed: The Great Eruption of 1767, a view from the harbour of Naples, by Pietro Fabris

most beautiful places in Europe. A panoramic view by Giovanni Battista Lusieri, 27 metres long and painted from the balcony of Hamilton's Palazzo Sessa, shows it in all its limpid seductiveness, and in such detail that you can pick out Hamilton's seaside retreat, the Villa Emma, on the far side of the bay.

This was also when the first major finds were being brought up from the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Sir William promptly started his first collection of antiquities. In selling these to the British Museum in 1772 he revolutionised the character of that institution — until then a repository of the natural sciences — and put it on the path to becoming a showcase for art and antiquities.

The recovery of Hamilton's scattered collections of Greek painted vases, gold jewellery, cameos, gemstones, Old Master and contemporary paintings, bronzes and sculpture is



Grand Tourist attraction: Emma Lady Hamilton as Three Muses, by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (c1789-90)

one of the triumphs of the show. The magnificent, colossal head of Hercules, chipped out of the lava at the foot of Vesuvius, is too good to go back into the museum's stores. So is the reconstructed 5th-century BC Greek tomb from Trebbia, with a bronze cheese-grater among the grave goods and small vases hanging on

the back wall. Famously unrecoverable is the part of Sir William's second vase collection, which went down in the HMS *Colossus* in a storm off the Isles of Scilly. To be remembered as a victim of this disaster and the long-suffering cuckold of the *menage à trois* with Nelson and his wife, Emma, has been Hamilton's fate until today.

Emma was effectively dumped on Hamilton by his nephew Charles Grey, whose mistress she had been. In tackling the delicate task of establishing a role for her in

Neapolitan society, Hamilton had the idea that Emma should pose as classical statues — she had already posed for Romney in London. Her metamorphosis from one character into another, with three cashmere shawls for props, became one of the tourist sights of Naples. Among the drawings and paintings of her, including those by Romney and Reynolds, the most enchanting is by Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun, who sketched her upturned face onto one of the doors at the Villa Emma with a stick of charcoal taken from the fire.

To resurrect Sir William as a benefactor to the nation, a connoisseur and man of taste who aimed to raise standards of design and art in Britain is one of the aims of this exhibition. Most successfully of all, it evokes the enormous excitement of living at the end of the 18th century, when so many branches of knowledge were at their very beginnings and the arts were enthusiastically embracing the discoveries of classical Greece and Rome.

Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and his collection, sponsored by Pirelli, is at the British Museum until July 14

A chorus of approval

One of Britain's greatest choral conductors, Sir David Willcocks, is to retire. Katharine Road reports

I hope nobody thinks they have joined the Bach Choir to sing Bach, remarked the choir's former director, Reginald Jacques, many years ago. Sir David Willcocks, who took over Jacques's post in 1960 and announces his retirement tomorrow, could not have put it better. For the legacy he leaves the Bach Choir is precisely that vast diversity of repertoire — plus the high standards demanded by the man who was simultaneously turning the choir of King's College, Cambridge, into one of the world's most formidable musical institutions.

The diversity is probably just as well. Willcocks can remember the King of Norway sleeping in a performance of Bach's *B Minor Mass* during a tour at the beginning of his tenure with the Bach Choir. But the fact that the singers were in Norway at all, and performing to such a distinguished audience, reflects the ambition that Willcocks had for the choir. Previously it had never ventured outside London; indeed, it gave only seven concerts a year. Now they number 20, and the choir has undertaken 17 foreign tours and produced a formidable collection of recordings.

The progress of the Bach Choir mirrors what Willcocks believes to be a general improvement of standards in the choral field. "Recordings have made a great deal of differ-

ence," he says. "People have come to expect as good a sound in a concert as they hear on a CD. But another factor is the blossoming of so many specialist groups in the past 20 years — it means that new standards are set and as a large, amateur choir we have to fight to compete with smaller, specialist ones."

But however many specialist groups there are, the Bach Choir has managed to achieve an enviable reputation of being committed to the performance of new works without being pigeonholed for focusing exclusively on contemporary music. The most recent venture has been to work closely with the Polish composer Penderecki.

If the Bach Choir is amateur in status, Willcocks has erased any tendency for it to be "amateurish" in approach. "I did not set out to change things, but in fact they have," Willcocks says. When he arrived the Bach Choir needed to import professional tenors to "stiffen" its ranks. That would not be necessary today.

Willcocks is the longest serving musical director the choir has had. "I was going to leave when I was 60," he says, "and then at 65, and then when I reached 70. Now I am 76. I am always looking forward to the next event, never back at the last."

Sir David Willcocks conducts Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in the Festival Hall (0171-960 4242) tomorrow at 11am

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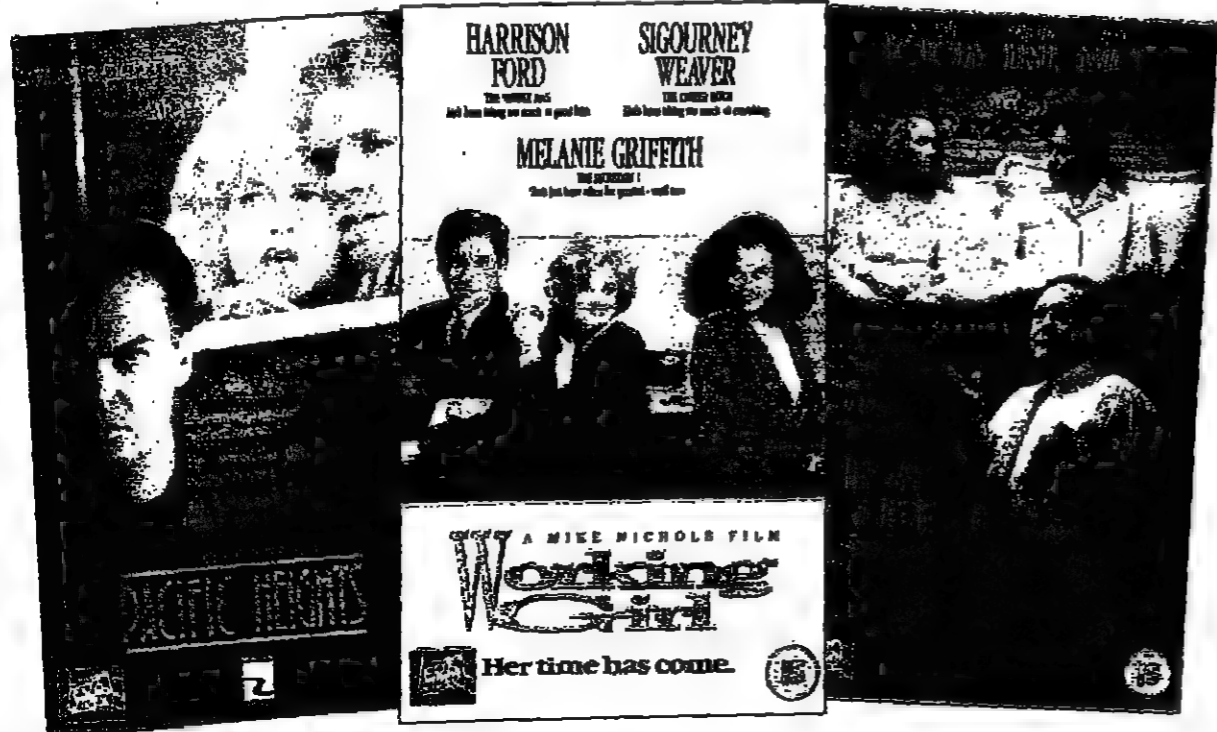
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The making of an island nation

Jonathan Mirsky on Taiwan's response to China's challenge

Some 620 foreign journalists will watch 14 million voters cast their ballots for Taiwan's President today. Few of these foreign reporters would have been here, even though it is Taiwan's first direct (and hence democratic) presidential election, had it not been for a sinister presence just across the horizon. Not far away, the People's Republic of China exercises a detachment of the largest army in the world, occasionally hurling missiles into the Taiwan Strait, ordering soldiers to storm deserted beaches under screaming jet cover and disturbing the sleep of villagers along the Fukien coast as it explodes tonnes of live ammunition.

Also not far off, but staying out of harm's way, cruise two US naval battle groups, part of what William Perry, Secretary of Defence, calls "the best damn navy in the world", exhibiting the greatest show of American force in the Western Pacific since the Vietnam War.

This is big news in a small place. What is emerging very fast here is a new democracy and a *de facto* nation, challenging those who define "Asian values" and shaking the Chinese Communist Party to its crumbling roots. China,

Peking's missiles guarantee Mr Lee millions of votes

nation of the media and its links to the "Black Societies", Taiwan's mafia, many members of which are KMT officials. Nor are the other parties free of this taint. When Taiwan's equivalent of the Mafia Don of Dons was shot dead recently, every political party sent a representative and a wreath to his funeral.

Corruption is a major campaign issue. Peking's missiles have guaranteed Mr Lee millions of votes today from people who would have preferred any other candidate but want an experienced hand at the helm during this crisis.

All week, during the proud reminders to foreigners that this is the first democratic election of a Chinese President for 5,000 years, the Tiananmen aura has hovered near. The People's Liberation Army is only just offstage. But Peking has been taken by surprise by an unusually decisive President Clinton and, since the arrival nearby of the aircraft carriers *Independence* and *Nimitz*, the prospect of the People's Liberation Army seizing even a Taiwan-controlled atoll has all but vanished.

This election has resulted in an international setback for Peking. Liu Binyan, a 71-year-old exiled investigative reporter whom China accuses of being the senior "Black Hand" behind the Tiananmen protests, is visiting Taiwan. Because of China's pressure, he says, Peking "has lost the hearts" of even those here who wanted reunification eventually. Moreover, they have made China an international outcast again, "as it was after Tiananmen".

Chinese officials have told their American counterparts frequently in recent weeks that for Peking, there are overriding issues. National unity is a traditional obsession of Chinese rulers. During the past 2,500 years the country has often been fragmented. Local riots have sparked provincial uprisings which, on occasion, have toppled dynasties. Minority peoples such as the Tibetan Buddhists and Sinkiang Muslims have struggled to wrench free.

What is unusual about Taiwan is that all presidential candidates here, supported by most citizens, assert that the island is, in practice, independent. "A rebellious province with an excellent army surrounded by a wide body of water," remarks Su Shaozhi, another exiled ex-party veteran in Taipei for the elections.

Unlike traditional rebel chieftains and the early 20th-century contenders for power, who included Mao's Communists, no one here wants to take power in Peking. The Kuomintang maintains a fiction of legal authority over China, Mongolia and Tibet, but in 1991 it renounced the use of force to exercise that authority. That is Peking's nightmare: a prosperous Chinese province truly on its own.

And with an elected Government. And during an interregnum in Peking, where the aged leader is dying and his lieutenants jockey for what remains of Communist power.

Oliver Walston argues that neither Government nor farmers could have averted the BSE crisis

Insight is an occupational disease of journalists which in its mildest form is merely irritating. However, when mixed in equal quantities with ignorance, it can produce lethal results. The firestorm of BSE hysteria is an example. As a result, I now find myself feeling profound sympathy for two groups about whom I have traditionally been less than enthusiastic: the present Government and my fellow farmers. It has also caused me to thank God that I am not a beef producer.

Today, some ten years after BSE was first identified, the Government stands accused of incompetence and complacency for not acting sooner and more decisively. Yet it is clear that if the Government had said ten years ago what it is saying today, it would have been rightly accused of irresponsible scaremongering. The scientific evidence which was published this week was simply not available when the disease first appeared in 1986.

In the intervening period, the Government followed the advice of its scientific advisers, which was evaluated in the light of current knowledge. Only when this knowledge altered did it take the sensible step of publishing the fact and

Farewell to the roast beef of old England

altering its policy. For once, I find it difficult to disagree with the actions of a Conservative Government.

My fellow farmers, whom I have often criticised for undue dependence on subsidies, are even less to blame. The infected bone meal from sheep which appears to have caused the outbreak of BSE was, it should be remembered, put in the rations not by greedy or slipshod farmers but by compounders looking for cheap ingredients. It is also worth remembering that this practice was both perfectly legal and widespread throughout Europe. If the first priority of consumers is cheap food, it may not be entirely coincidental that the same objective is adopted all the way up the food chain.

The irony — and the worry — today is that it is now too late for any new measures to be taken. The regula-

tions restricting the use of infected tissue and those governing the slaughter of infected animals have all been in operation for the past seven years. Thus, if any infected beef has been consumed, it was certainly consumed before 1988. Meanwhile, all we can do is to wait and wonder whether an epidemic will erupt. I find myself trying to remember how many Cornish pasties I ate in 1986. It is not a pleasant feeling.

Then again, neither is it a pleasant feeling for a beef producer to realise that his 600kg steer, which was worth £750 last week, is worth £550 this week and could be worth much less next week. This fall in price has more than wiped out any profit he would have made. Cattle men are left feeling scared and helpless.

There is no immediate solution to this crisis. To slaughter the entire

national herd would be impracticable. All dairy products and all meat would have to be imported — and there are simply not sufficient quantities available to meet this demand. The knock-on effect would be equally catastrophic as abattoirs, tanneries and producers manufacturing foods as varied as chocolate and jelly found their supplies drying up.

Of course there will be a few beneficiaries on the farms of Britain. Organic beef producers will enjoy increased sales, but this will remain a niche market restricted to those who can afford the very high premium which this produce fetches. Sheep producers have already seen a sharp increase in their prices: a fat lamb which sold for £55 last week fetched £70 this week. The pork and poultry trade will also help to fill the gap left by collapsing beef sales.

The tragedy facing both farmers and the Government is that the crisis has spiralled out of control. The loss of confidence in beef is so profound that no amount of reassuring ministerial pronouncements can possibly repair the damage. The lady in the supermarket queue may not be interested in the scientific minutiae of BSE, but she knows it is sensible to avoid beef. On the international scene, the position is similar: even if the EU veterinary committee gives British beef its approval, France, Germany and the other member states are unlikely to lift their bans.

Faced with the uncomfortable realisation that the media will continue to pour petrol on the flames, the Government will, I suppose, retreat into a series of public relations actions intended to reassure a frightened public. The most likely of these would be to slaughter every animal in any herd which has ever had BSE. This would, of course, have no effect on the disease itself but might show a dynamic and active Government. Meanwhile, farmers in the uplands of Britain will be going bankrupt and nobody will care.

The author is a Cambridgeshire farmer, a writer and a member of the Agricultural Reform Group.

Time to make divorce humane



On Monday Members of Parliament will be voting on the best measure to emerge from the latter years of the Major administration. It is Lord Mackay of Clashfern's Family Law Bill. It proposes to make divorce in Britain more difficult.

Despite the claims of a mendacious and bizarre campaign against the Bill, it will do just that. Under the new law, the overwhelming majority of divorces would take longer than now, 75 per cent of them twice as long. Unlike now, divorce would become impossible without a prior financial settlement. Unlike now, the present and probable future conduct of a parent will specifically determine access to children. Unlike now, nobody could have a quick divorce merely by supplying a partner with "grounds" such as adultery, violence or unreasonable behaviour. That is what I call harder divorce — but it is also more humane.

The campaign to retain Britain's present high-speed divorce system — average length seven months — is confused. It has been led with panache by the Editor of the *Daily Mail*, Paul Dacre, to the growing embarrassment of his staff, and has captured the moral interventionist wing of the Conservative Party. The campaign is eager to retain at its core the concept of "fault". Marriage is not just a bond of love or a pledge for eternity, say the campaigners, but a legal contract. If one party breaks it against the wishes of the other, he or she should suffer. Marital failure should imply guilt, not something as amorphous as "irretrievable breakdown". As symbol of this guilt, divorce should be kept expensive, litigious and acrimonious. To hell with the happiness of those involved. I find this position immoral. Lord Mackay's Bill does not introduce "no fault" divorce. All it does is end the

use, and abuse, of the concept of fault as a means to a quickie divorce. Fault remains in British divorce law: in section 25 of the Matrimonial Causes Act on the division of property and in schedule 8 of the new Bill on custody of children. By denying divorce in the absence of a settlement, the Bill would increase, not diminish, the innocent party's leverage. At present that party's only redress is to force delay or expensively contest the divorce, a route chosen in only 7 per cent of cases. Full and final settlement before divorce is a great advance on the present quickie system, whose "loose ends" poison future marriages and damage children.

The Family Law Bill has brought out an unattractive streak in the Conservative Party, that of punitive moral interventionism. Ralph Harris, in an article on this page a week ago, accused the Lord Chancellor of such grave errors as enjoying the support of progressives and of wanting divorce "on demand". The trumpet on such a moral issue must never "give forth an uncertain sound", said Lord Harris, though no sound is more uncertain than the present quickie divorce. This fierce opponent of state intervention in his right to smoke suddenly demands intervention in other people's domestic misery. "Is it not defeatist," he cries, "to conclude that law is powerless to do much about it? I am sure Lenin would have said the same."

Laws that prescribe moral attitudes usually make asses of themselves. The present divorce law is inhumane. The advocates of "fault" argue that, by forcing the warring parties publicly to blame each other if they wish for a quick divorce, they are deterring divorce and protecting marriage. This has to be the most specious defence of the status quo in

Simon Jenkins
The Family Law Bill is no threat to marriage. It should pass

all of public policy. The bulk of the rise in divorce since 1969 has actually been in fault-based cases. The concept of fault does not deter divorce: 75 per cent of couples make use of this procedure despite the cost, misery and hurt to children. It is a bad argument that has made bad law.

If the opponents of the Mackay Bill want to stop divorce they should come clean and stop it. If they believe that people should be made to stick to their pledges, especially where children are involved, they should make them. But they are unwilling to go that far. So they defend a law that merely makes divorce messy, painful and expensive.

loveless marriage stand condemned in the eyes of most humanitarians. But what most children want is certainty as to their future. They do not want delay.

This is affirmed by every responsible children's agency in opposing any delay longer than a year, by the Children's Society, the NSPCC, Barnardo's, the National Children's Home. They all point out that what children most dread at present is the feature of "fault" most beloved of those arguing for the status quo: the spectacle of each parent having to berate the other in a public court for his or her adultery or misbehaviour. To seek to corral children into being parties to this parental humiliation is callous beyond belief.

We would all like to see less divorce. Nobody has been able to show how delaying divorce beyond a year will promote marriage, as suggested in Lady Young's failed Lords amendment. There is no evidence that delay promotes reconciliation. For most couples, it merely prolongs uncertainty and postpones the rebuilding of their lives apart. If the objectors were serious about less divorce they might turn their attention to making couples think longer before entering unwise marriages. The way to curb divorce-on-demand is to curb marriage-on-demand. The Church of England, so careless of divorces, might institute a one-year "cooling-off period" between banns and wedding day. Thousands of divorces might be prevented.

The reason for Lord Mackay extending the present average period from seven months to a minimum of a year is to ensure that both the parties are sure in their decision and that they have reached a full and final settlement. If they cannot agree, there is still recourse from the mediator to the law. If the process to settlement takes two or even five years, so be it —

a powerful incentive on the "guilty" party to settle. The inclusion of pension-splitting in a future Bill will make that settlement even more complex. But what matters is settlement, not the length of the delay.

Family law is law, with an obligation to fairness and efficiency. It is not a religious doctrine. It is not Lord Harris's moral trumpet or what Tessa Kewick calls in *The Daily Telegraph* "the pulsating heart of Conservative tradition". If that heart is about anything, it should be about humane legislation that respects personal freedom and responsibility from state interference. Tories should not try to nationalise the family.

Divorce law poses no threat to marriage. Marriage is hard enough without denying those who make mistakes the hope of redemption in a new life. Marital breakdown is no crime. Divorce is by definition about a relationship between consenting adults that, for whatever reason, has not worked. Governments cannot make it work. The thesis that this Bill will "undermine marriage" or some other Bill might uphold it — implies a superiority of the State over personal emotions that, in its limiting case, is communist. I believe that this sort of Toryism, illiberal, punitive and authoritarian, makes the party deeply unattractive to many people.

I see it as a virtue in a law that it should seek reconciliation between parties, minimise cost and protect children. For the opposite — blame, delay, misery and expense — to be proclaimed as virtues in defence of moral truncheons is squalid. Divorce law is not a trumpet. It is the mechanism by which contracts can be dissolved in the interests of the parties involved, not the State. That is patently the aim of Lord Mackay's Bill. It should pass.

History man

TORY spindocors are already bracing themselves for one of their most frightful party conferences, to take place in the autumn of next year. The prospect of shoring up the party faithful after a heavy loss at the general election preys heavily on their minds.



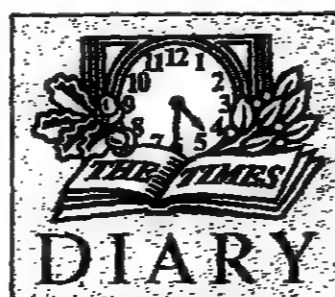
They should prepare themselves for worse still. Alan Clark, the preening diarist, is to present a four-part documentary series on the party for the BBC during the course of the conference. It is unlikely to be overly sympathetic.

"It's a completely objective look at what the party did in the 20th century, going from the setting up of the 1922 Committee until the 1997 [sic] election," he says. "Conservatives are not actually particularly bothered by their history. That is one of their problems — they are only concerned with the day-to-day problems of party management."

Clark insists that the programme, which will be accompanied by a book, will be a serious analysis. "No, it will not be salacious," he says. "It's a ridiculous adjective to use."

Curry's off

AFTER four years of grey nights and freezing winds, the owner of the only curry house in the Orkney Islands is closing up and returning to the mainland. Having arrived in



the hope of tapping a rich vein of tourist trade, Moina Miah, the owner of the Mumutaz restaurant, is now a sorry sight. He is terribly lonely and itching to hear his native Bengali once more.

It all started so well. Miah, originally from Silhet in Bangladesh, and his six children came to Orkney from Nairn. "We had thousands of tourists coming to look at some old rocks," he said miserably, "and they would all come and eat some of my special Lemany Chicken."

The Bangladeshi staff who came over with Miah, however, proved his downfall.

"It was terrible," said Miah, with a Bengali love-song playing in the background. "The cooks and waiters would get lonely, and each night I would go to the restaurant

and find another one had gone. Now I am the lonely one."

Lover's tiff

THE FOREIGN Office is appalled by Kenneth Clarke's less than dignified encounter this week in South Africa with an individual who styles himself "Mr Lover Man" and dresses as a condom. Clarke lumbered up blithely to the rubber-clad icon who was promoting AIDS awareness, shook his hand



South Africa's Mr Lover Man meets Kenneth Clarke

and posed pot-bellied for the cameras. "We would never have let our man get into a position where he had to shake hands with a condom," harrumphed one of Malcolm Rifkind's minders.

Blame for the episode is being placed on Jill Rutter, the press officer accompanying him on the trip. Perhaps this is an unjust accusation, for Clarke is quite capable of making howlers on his own. Yesterday in Zimbabwe, he referred repeatedly to Rhodesia.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, currently playing at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, is getting a new laugh. It comes in Act One Scene Three when he says the line: "Me thinks sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man has: but I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wit."

No Honor

MYSTERY surrounds the Venus de la Mode modelling prize awarded last week in Paris to Honor Fraser, sister of Lord Lovat. For Miss Fraser, who was voted the model of the season prize previously won by both Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell, awards ceremonies hold about as much appeal as a ten-inch heel.

So, after a hard week on the French catwalks, she decided to pass on the air-kissing and headed instead for a Humphrey Bogart film with her boyfriend, an undergraduate at the LSE.

Back at the awards, however, when the presenter announced the award of the prize to "Mademoiselle Honor Fraser" a man approached the stage, picked up the gawgaw and thanked the audi-



Honor Fraser: missing award

ence on her behalf. The fashion types looked perplexed, but flapped their programmes in approval all the same. One problem: who was this man? No one seemed to know, least of all Honor and her boyfriend. The search for him and the missing award continues.

P.H.S



POOR JOHN BULL

It will never be glad, confident carving again

Beef has, until now, enjoyed a privileged place on the Englishman's table. But the terrible prospect of cattle herds facing slaughter and the profoundly unsettling possibility of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease incubating, unknown, in thousands across the country has put an end to that. The meat intertwined with the island story has now become another national institution in which the nation has no confidence.

From the 18th-century beef has been more than a staple foodstuff: it has been central to Britain's self-definition. The Roast Beef of Old England was no bogus Merrie England marketing invention like the egregious ploughman's lunch, but an authentic coinage of Henry Fielding's which sprang from the ubiquity and symbolic importance of the meat for the Georgians. Beef became a potent metaphor in literature, cartoons and political discourse for the virtues of the newly-unified British state. A nation of beefeaters was sturdy, handy with a knife or sword, prosperous and free.

The ascendancy of beef in the 18th century sprang from the economic success and agricultural improvements which placed Britain on the trajectory to pre-eminence. In the late Middle Ages and Tudor times what prosperity there was had been built on wool and wool. With Protestantism, and capitalism, Britain grew wealthier than its ancient regime adversaries across the Channel. Where the continentals relied on oxen as draught animals and swine for their meat, the British could afford to eat the more expensive cultivated flesh of the cow. The temperate climate which encouraged political moderation also favoured good grazing. The one part of the British Isles where beef-eating did not take root was impoverished Ireland, where the few cattle were working animals and it was held that "the common sort" would never kill a cow.

The British taste for beef soon became integral to foreign perceptions. In 1748 the Swedish visitor Pehr Kalm remarked that "the art of cooking as practised by most Englishmen does not extend beyond roast beef and plum pudding". More importantly, perhaps, beef became the symbol of the advantages Britons enjoyed which were

denied the lesser breeds across the water. Gillray and Hogarth, two of the artists most vividly engaged with the Georgian social scene, deployed beef as a metaphor for liberty. In 1792 Gillray contrasted the citizens of Revolutionary France reduced to eating scallions and in fear of their freedom with the prosperous and independent Briton plump and free to enjoy best beef.

The importance of beef to the British character was also reflected in the efforts made by rival ideologies to appropriate its imagery. Whoever stood for beef stood for Britain. The Tories and the country faction in Georgian politics portrayed themselves as pure-bred yeomen with plain beef on their oak tables in contrast to Whig grandees such as Walpole and Newcastle whose court elite preferred highly sauced, and highly suspect, foreign delicacies. And, while other nations might equate prosperity with a chicken in the pot, redistributive radicals in Britain, from Cobbett to G.K. Chesterton sought to spread wealth by seeing men secure an acre, and a cow. Even the martial skills which underpinned imperial expansion were attributed to beef: 18th-century sailors ate 208lb of it per annum, six times the per capita consumption last year, and the army relied on bully beef as much as the Gatling gun when it bore the white man's burden.

After this week any thought of preserving beef as symbol of virility and liberty looks, at best, forlorn. Other nations have had their metaphorical mascots in nature threatened. America has seen the bison leave the prairies, giant redwoods felled and the bald eagle face extinction. The Russians have seen the sturgeon, whose eggs proclaimed imperial greatness as assuredly as M. Fabergé's, succumb to pollution. The French saw the vines which furnished their finest product blighted forever by phylloxera, and the Irish search for self-sufficiency has always been more urgently sought and more poignantly elusive since the Potato Famine. But none of these nations has suffered such a blow, so precipitately, to its esteem as Britain this week. Tomorrow's Sunday lunch will be a melancholy mealtime as Britons recognise it will never be glad, confident, carving again.

SUPERIOR WOMEN

But who is the most powerful of them all?

Sometimes it takes a survey to discover a truth. When our Magazine first embarked upon the exercise of identifying the 100 most powerful women in the world, we assumed that competition for places would be fierce. After all, women have made great strides in the past few decades. Surely the problem would be to choose between competing candidates, not to scour the world for more? Not so: we found it hard to fill the places with 100 truly powerful women. Of the 292 countries in the world, only six have female prime ministers and two have women as heads of state or government. At the top of business and finance, women are even rarer. Science is almost exclusively led by men. And while there are many successful female performers in the arts and the media, the big corporations are still run by men.

Inclusion in the list was determined by points for political power, financial power and personal influence. Jostling for today's top place were Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Hillary Clinton. Had the question been asked two years ago, Mrs Clinton would probably have won. She was then part of what was almost a joint presidency, sharing the job of the world's most powerful man. Now she has lost public power; her strategic influence over the coming election is wholly private.

Miss Bhutto, on the other hand, runs a country with a population of 130 million and a nuclear bomb. Her power may be constrained by the military on one side and fundamentalists on the other, but we considered that she exerted more influence on more people's lives than any other woman in the world. Asia has the highest

percentage of women in powerful political positions — partly because politics there is dynastic, and many of these women are wives or daughters of assassinated leaders.

In other parts of the world — notably the Middle East, Africa, Russia, Latin America and, surprisingly perhaps, Australasia — there still seems to be a cultural bar to female achievement. Scarcely any powerful women could be found in these regions. Even in countries that pay lip service to the advancement of women, there are few of them in the really important jobs. Britain, for instance, has no women chairmen or chief executives of top companies; no women heads of broadcasting organisations; no female heads of large arts companies; and only two women out of 22 in the Cabinet.

So it is a sign of the lack of rivals, as well as of her continuing world influence, that Baroness Thatcher came joint third on the list, despite having been out of politics for half a decade. That she found herself in a dead heat with the Queen was unintentional, but perhaps apt given the slightly competitive nature of their relationship. The record of Britain under Margaret Thatcher — and indeed Pakistan under Miss Bhutto — is testimony to the fact that women in power can be as able and as strong as men. Yet the path to those positions is still strewn with obstacles, both overt discrimination and unthinking assumptions that disqualify women from top jobs. Women are gradually moving up the ladder of success. If we were to conduct this survey again in ten years' time, we would hope not to find the newer generation of female achievers still excluded from those rungs at the top.

SOUKS ON WHEELS

Why car-boot sales bring out the bazaar in us

East and West, in spite of their much-touted never-the-twinness, meet every Sunday in Britain at the country's car-boot sales. As the week ends, and the Great British Public throngs to these souks on wheels, the land resounds to the chirp of car-boot commerce. "Old records rare and round, yours for just a pound." "Books fat and dense, buy 'em for fifty pence." "Cheese, cheese, eat my cheese please." Furniture, children's clothes, crockery, golf clubs, goldfish, fountain pens, pots and pans, televisions: nothing is too esoteric, nor too unwieldy, for the British bargain-hunters and gatherers who weekly stalk these sales.

Yet in the spirit of Jonas Chuzzlewit, there is a rule for bargains: do other men, for they would do you. And in the best traditions of the marketplace, there are other apophthegms, all bristling with a British common-sense: bargains made in speed are commonly repented at leisure; it's a bad bargain where nobody gains; make every bargain clear and plain, that none may afterward complain: he'll ne'er get a pennyworth that is afraid to ask a price.

Buying something — or selling — is only part of the story. Most people do not drive 20 miles to an unkempt park just to buy a kettle; nor do they catch a bus (perhaps

changing once or twice) to buy a video recorder with no visible guarantee. These car-boot sales are guided by a more basic human urge: the need to haggle.

The souk-sense is not just an oriental habit, relished by visitors to Marrakesh, Casablanca, Cairo, Lucknow or Penang. In Britain, too, we seize the chance to lock horns with sellers of goods. Every Sunday we bargain, beat down, chaffer, dicker, haggler, squabble and wrangle. "A bit more; a bit less." "Come off it, that's robbery: No it's not, it's a Christmas present." "I'll take five for twenty quid: I'll give you three, plus this sweet budgie." "Leave it out, I've got a wife and six kids to feed: Let me buy that for a tanner then and you can feed them."

Whereas its owner never plies you with cups of sweet tea, nor ever introduces a moustachioed cousin down the road with even better carpets, the British car boot is about the size of an Eastern merchant's stall. Go to one this Sunday and wallow in its challenges. Take your time, size up your quarry, rehearse your best lines and move in for the kill. "How much is that toaster for?" "Forty pounds for you, madam." "What do you take me for?" "A toast-eater, of course." "Right, I'll give you twenty-five. I only eat croissants."

Steps to reinforce child protection

From the Chair of Action on Child Exploitation

Sir, Alan Franks ("Taking liberties", Magazine, March 16) is right to point out that although we have a national register of children at risk of sexual abuse, there is no comparable register of child sex offenders. There is now considerable weight of opinion amongst those bodies charged with protecting children, as well as among the general public, in favour of the creation of such a register.

The view of Action on Child Exploitation is that paedophilia is a sexual preference that will stay for life, that changing the behaviour of child sexual offenders is very difficult, and that the success rate is very low. We therefore believe that, in the interests of protecting children, there should be adequate methods of controlling paedophiles and every attempt should be made to find an effective way of changing their behaviour.

The problem is exacerbated by the very low conviction rate of offenders. Even those sentenced by the court are free to disappear into the community on completing their time in prison or on licence or when their probation orders are terminated. Generally they have to engender suspicion or commit another offence before police records are checked.

We believe that the arguments for a register outweigh the intrusions into civil liberties which its establishment would mean. Moreover we believe that it should be held by the police and, with normal safeguards, be available to statutory child-protection agencies. A requirement on the offender, punishable as an offence if disregarded, should be to keep the register informed of changes in address or employment.

We also believe that the register should be kept in such a way as to ensure that the child-protection agencies are warned when paedophiles move into their area, particularly when they move into households where there are children or into jobs with power over or contact with children.

This letter is written with the full understanding of the civil-liberty issues at stake. Children have civil liberties too, one of which is to be free from abuse by adults. I was pleased to learn today that the Government is to give serious consideration to such a measure.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID NIVEN,

Chair,

Action on Child Exploitation,

16 Kent Street, Birmingham,

March 22.

From Ms Andrea Kelmanson

Sir, The repeated attempts of Thomas Hamilton, the Dunblane killer, to work with young children should serve as a warning to all parents to look carefully at the clubs and youth groups which their children attend, and at their systems for recruiting, selecting, supervising and supporting volunteers and paid staff.

In 1993 the Home Office, in collaboration with a number of voluntary organisations, published a code of practice, *Safe from Harm*, which describes the steps which a well run group should take to create a secure environment for the care of children. Similar guidance has since been issued by Volunteer Development Scotland and Child Care Northern Ireland.

One practical step which anxious parents can take is to find out whether the club or group which their child attends is aware of and adhering to the standards set by these codes.

Yours faithfully,

ANDREA KELMANSON

(Director),

The Volunteer Centre UK,

Carriage Row,

183 Eversholt Street, NW1,

March 20.

From the Reverend Jonathan Smith

Sir, Writing in response to the murderous act of Thomas Hamilton at Dunblane, the Reverend John Camp (letter, March 21) asks, "Is mental disorder to be equated with evil?". His question clearly requires a negative answer, which may then have some bearing on the culpability of the perpetrator.

However, in no way does it diminish the intrinsic evil contained in the wicked deed. Evil encompasses that area where frustration, pain and death spread desolation beyond the reach of man's clear responsibility.

Yours faithfully,

JONATHAN SMITH,

The Rectory,

3 The Moor, Carlton, Bedford,

March 21.

From Mr Gerry Hanson

Sir, Mr Camp's question misrepresents the reactions which it implicitly criticises. Dunblane demonstrates how an unbalanced person can commit an evil act. It is the deed which was evil — the perpetrator mentally ill.

Such an interpretation, I suggest, makes the deed no less evil but is in accord with the Christian concept of "hate the sin, but love the sinner".

Yours truly,

GERRY HANSON,

Powers Lodge, 74a Slough Road,

Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire,

March 21.

From Mr Michael Henderson-Begg

Sir, If the Kent police, using a laser camera, can in one hour catch 183 motorists exceeding the speed limit in a restricted area (report, March 19), and then fine them £40 each, surely by earning over £7,000 an hour the camera, even taking into account the administrative costs involved in collecting the fines, must recoup its installation and maintenance costs in a relatively short time.

Rather than introduce costly traffic "calming" measures, which end up being of more inconvenience to local residents than to the motorists they are meant to deter, would it not be more economical for all local councils to install such cameras?

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL HENDERSON-BEGG,

66 Westbury Road,

New Malden, Surrey,

March 20.

From Mr Christopher Frazer

Sir, It is specious of Peter Hitchens, of the *Daily Express*, to suggest (letter, March 21) that Cherie Blair's political views are relevant today because she might once have chosen a political career.

The plain fact is that she is not a candidate for public office, and her opinions are as irrelevant as those of any other politician's spouse.

Yours faithfully,

CHRISTOPHER FRAZER,

2 Harcourt Buildings, Temple, EC4,

March 21.

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

'Placepersons' and votes of principle

From the Bishop of Oxford

Sir, William Rees-Mogg ("Tories but not conservatives", March 18) describes those who voted against Lady Young's amendment in the Family Law Bill as "a coalition of permissives and placepersons". Whether the period of reflection and consideration before a divorce is granted should be one year, 18 months, or longer is not a matter of Christian principle but of judgment.

I voted in favour of the one-year period above all because those in the House who have most to do with children believe that more than one year would be harmful to children of divorcing parents.

This, for example, was the position of Lady Faithfull, who sadly died last week (obituary, March 14; and see letter, March 19) and nobody in their right mind could describe her as either a permissive or a placeperson. Her life was a passionate and practical concern for children and young people. When it is a question of balancing many factors, it is the judgment of people like her that one tends to trust.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD OXON,
Diocesan Church House,
North Hinksey, Oxford,
March 19.

From Mr Tristan Garell-Jones,
MP for Watford (Conservative)

Sir, It seems that anyone who does not vote with Lord Rees-Mogg is a placeperson and not a Conservative.

If there was a treaty too far (which I dispute), it was not Maastricht but the Single European Act on which most of today's Euro-sceptics were notably silent. Maastricht, to a substantial degree, reins in some of the excesses that emerged from the Single Act.

No doubt Lord Rees-Mogg would describe both Baroness Thatcher and

Lord Tebbit as placepersons for having voted for it.

I agree that the Conservative Party is a broad church, but even though Lord Rees-Mogg displays distinctly Whiggish tendencies, I would be so presumptuous as to say he should not be permitted to continue to describe himself as a Conservative if he wishes to do so.

Yours faithfully,
TRISTAN GARELL-JONES,
House of Commons,
March 19.

From Mr Raymond W. Baldwin

Sir, I protest most strongly at Lord Rees-Mogg's unfair criticism of the Prime Minister.

The statesman whose opinion I would most value is one who does seem, in the midst of a Babel of journalists and assorted experts, to be trying to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

A chief point of guidance for me is to look at the one who appears to have striven, with greatest judgment and determination to solve the perennial problem of the IRA. Here the outstanding candidate is of course John Major.

Yours faithfully,
RAYMOND W. BALDWIN,
Penn, Alderley Edge, Cheshire,
March 19.

From Mr Hugh Mackenzie

Sir, William Rees-Mogg uncharacteristically errs. The Lord Chancellor is neither "glib" nor "too much impressed by official advice". He is widely recognised as being principled, fair and hugely competent.

Yours sincerely,
HUGH M. MACKENZIE,
Hilton of Cadboll Farmhouse,
Fearn, By Tain, Ross-shire.

From Mr Stephen Plunkett

Sir, The news of an exodus of members from the Methodist Church means there is only one conclusion if it is to survive — unification with the Anglican Church. The erosion of its natural membership base applies to all established churches. Yet the need for an active and creative spiritual dimension in daily life and a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ is all the more important today.

Few people are equipped to cope alone with the daily crossfire of modern life, where potential relationships, within and outside marriage, are increasingly undermined. This is where leadership within the broad body of the Church is needed. A stronger church with a more informal institutional structure can provide the service that people require. It is then up to church leaders as well as the lay members to reconsider how to get their message across.

I appeal to the leaders of both the Methodist and Anglican churches to reopen the talks that Archbishop Ramsey originated several decades ago. The infusion of new blood and enthusiasm after a unification would lead the way for renewal and growth within the Church.

Yours sincerely,
STEPHEN PLUNKETT,
17 Wandale Road, SW17,
March 21.

seemingly ever-increasing transfer of power?

Yours faithfully,
JILL KING,
4 Groby Court,
Groby Road, Altrincham, Cheshire,
March 20.

From Mrs R. Stewart-Jones

Sir, Those parents who cannot control verbally what their children watch on television will probably have to ask those same children how to manipulate the "V-chip".

Yours faithfully,
ROSEMARY STEWART-JONES,
Harcourt House,
West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex,
March 18.

In the chair

From Lord Esher

Sir, You publish today, alongside one another, letters from two ladies. One describes herself as a chair, the other as a chairperson — both to my mind equally absurd. Why have we not in England, years ago, borrowed the Scots word, *convenor*, which simply solves this silly problem.

Yours truly,
ESHER,
Snowball Hill, Russell's Water,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire,
March 19.

Cherie Blair

From Mr Christopher Frazer

Sir, It is specious of Peter Hitchens, of the *Daily Express*, to suggest (letter, March 21) that Cherie Blair's political views are relevant today because she might once have chosen a political career.

The plain fact is that she is not a candidate for public office, and her opinions are as irrelevant as those of any other politician's spouse.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER FRAZER,
2 Harcourt Buildings, Temple, EC4,
March 21.

Artistic integrity of musical soundbite

From the Chairman of the Richard Strauss Society

Sir, You report today that the conductor, Claudio Abbado, is suing his record company, Deutsche Grammophon, on the ground (among others) that they have damaged the artistic integrity of Gustav Mahler's music by compiling a compact disc consisting of slow movements from four of his symphonies.

There are historical precedents where a composer was happy to produce what might be called a "soundbite" of his own work. Richard Strauss produced two waltz sequences from his opera *Der Rosenkavalier* and a symphonic fantasy from his opera *Die Frau Ohne Schatten*. Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's piano work, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, could hardly be said to damage Mussorgsky's artistic integrity.

The real reason behind the move to compilations is simply one of economics. I suspect few composers of the past, had they had the opportunity of enjoying extra revenue from their works, would have felt their integrity under threat.

The serious music lover does not have to buy these compilations, but must realise that their high sales enable record companies to invest in really first-class new recordings, such as Decca's reported £1 million on Soli conducting *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* (1992).

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD GOLDSMITH,
Chairman,
Richard Strauss Society,
Whitcroft, Poole Street,
Cavendish, Sudbury, Suffolk,
March 20.

From Mr Robert Layton

Sir, Richard Morrison ("Who killed the great dictators?", Arts, March 20) may or may not be right in his surmise that there are no charismatic conductors nowadays, though the same might be said of critics. I can't imagine scholar-critics like Ernest Newman or Eric Blom, writing in the 1950s, or writers like Compton Mackenzie, having any more truck with the cannibalisation of Mahler symphonies than has Abbado.

Mr Morrison errs in imagining that record executives are trying to widen the public for good music. Their interest is not so commercially pure, but rather purely commercial, and if shredding the Mona Lisa and selling bits of it would make them money they would do it.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT LAYTON,
112 Goldhurst Terrace, NW6,
March 21.

From Mr Max Prola

Sir, Richard Morrison relates that conductors now rank rather low in the hierarchy of today's opera house, a venue in which "musical values are mocked by wacky stage concepts, and conductors don't seem to object".

He forgets that one conductor has stepped forward to stem the tide of insane opera productions. Our own Sir Edward Downes courageously refused to be associated with a horrendous *Nabucco* that he was to have conducted in the Royal Opera's Verdi Festival this summer (report, December 23, 1995). Let us hope that others, conductors and singers alike, will emulate him.

Yours truly,
MAX PROLA,
The Croft,
High Leigh, Knutsford, Cheshire,
March 21.

Bar on the Internet

From Mr Neil Addison

Sir, Barrister Peter Gray (report, March 20) will not find the Bar rules helpful to him when advertising his services on the Internet.

If clients want to use his services they will have to go through a solicitor, which means e-mailing the solicitor, who then e-mails Mr Gray, who will have to e-mail his reply to the solicitor to e-mail back to the client: a procedure which does rather put the Bar in the slow lane of the information superhighway.

Things are not so bad, however, for foreign clients, who can contact Mr Gray directly. He can be directly e-mailed from Calais but not from Dover.

As the 21st century approaches the Bar remains stuck with its 19th-century restrictive practices.

Yours sincerely,
NEIL ADDISON,
5 Garsdale Road,
Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear,
March 21.

Canada geese

From Mr Ron Robins

Sir, I am sure the Canada Goose Conservation Society (letter, March 19) has laudable aims, but having picked my way carefully to the beach across my lawn in British Columbia through Canada goose committee meetings discussing world domination (and who can gainsay the success of their ambitions?) I feel Canada goose conservation takes the biscuit.

Yours faithfully,
RON ROBINS,
The Long Barn, Home Farm,
Hartham, Corsham, Wiltshire,
March 20.



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Yours faithfully, RON ROBINS, The Long Barn, Home Farm, Hartham, Corsham, Wiltshire, March 20.

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THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY MARCH 23 1996

Subsidence blights housing recovery

By Sara McConnell
RENEWED fears of subsidence are blighting growing numbers of houses for sale as cautious valuers insist on additional engineers' reports for any visible cracks.
In most cases, cracks are not due to subsidence, but prospective buyers are refusing to spend hundreds of pounds on extra reports and are going elsewhere. Lenders will not advance mortgages unless satisfied with a valuation.
This is a blow for the housing market, just as it is starting to show signs of recovery after five years in the doldrums.
Insurers were forced to pay £26 million in subsidence claims in 1995, more than double the amount in the previous year. Norwich Union paid £18 million worth of claims for subsidence last summer. Commercial Union set aside an extra £26 million, and Legal & General paid out £23 million. They say that another hot summer will



Pinstriped pickets descended on the City yesterday, to protest against the office suit, as part of a campaign by Levi Strauss, the casual wear company, in support of a ban on formal suits for at least one day each week.

BCCI liquidators fight threat to fee

By Patricia Tehan, Banking Correspondent
THE liquidators of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International may lose 40 per cent of their £10 million Luxembourg fees, and future fees worldwide are threatened, after a panel of "experts" in Luxembourg told a court that their charges were too high.
In court yesterday, Deloitte & Touche, the liquidator, defended their fees, and, in a letter to the experts, the firm has described an expert report as "fundamentally misconceived, superficial and inadequate". BCCI collapsed in 1991 with estimated liabilities of \$14 billion and still has a black hole of \$10 billion.
The liquidators were particularly stung by the experts' attempts to force Brian Smouha, the Deloitte & Touche senior partner who co-ordinated the worldwide liquidation of the bank, to take lower fees than the experts have agreed for themselves.
In theory, the expert opinion is applied only to £2.5 million fees for work done in relation to Luxembourg-based BCCI SA by Deloitte & Touche in the six months after BCCI's collapse. This means a reduction of £1 million. However, the liquidators fear that if the Luxembourg court accepts the expert opinion, it could seek a similar reduction to subsequent fees of up to £10 million.
The total Deloitte & Touche fees so far are \$300 million. Although most of this has been approved by UK and Cayman Island courts and creditors' committees, the liquidators fear that future fees could be affected. Fees are running at tens of millions of dollars a year. In the UK, where the bulk of liquidation fees are incurred, fees were \$14 million last year.
Tony Houghton, a partner in Deloitte & Touche said: "We have taken this very seriously. They have suggested that we have over-charged, that the rates we have applied are not related to the work we have undertaken. This is professionally damaging."
The experts were appointed by the Luxembourg court in 1993 in a standard procedure there to review the activities of liquidators in the provisional liquidation after the collapse of BCCI in July 1991 until January 1992. Even though the Luxembourg court had approved the Deloitte & Touche fees, the experts commented on the fees applied for by the liquidators.
The panel of experts is made up of Bernard Harder, a French accountant, a sole practitioner, Dr Christian Derps, a German lawyer in a two-partner practice, and Jean Reuter, a Luxembourg accountant from a small firm.
They recommended that the liquidators' fees be at the rate for a European audit. Mr Houghton said that they calculated a mixed bag of rates, looking at what they said were average rates for European firms, and came up with what they called "an average rate".
Mr Houghton said that Deloitte & Touche finally received a translation of the draft report from the experts early last year. In its response, it sought expert opinion from other firms that have done big insolvency investigations. KPMG and Coopers & Lybrand gave evidence in support of Deloitte & Touche, saying that insolvency rates are higher than audit to reflect the different nature of the assignment and the role of professionals in managing the future of a company in crisis. Both said that the Deloitte & Touche fees were less than they would have charged.
In a letter to the experts in January, John Connolly, Deloitte & Touche managing partner, said: "The experts did not even consider relevant insolvency rates nor indeed the evidence from independent experts." He said of the panel: "The expertise is of no value and should be ignored."

Success for \$2.6bn Disney global bond

By Our Banking Correspondent
WALT DISNEY'S \$2.6 billion global bond issue was snapped up by investors yesterday.
CS First Boston and Merrill Lynch, joint lead managers of the deal, had initially offered a \$2 billion five-tranche global issue in five and ten-year tranches. However, strong demand for the prestigious Disney name prompted managers to raise the size of the offering.
Over-subscription for the global offering enabled managers to achieve a better price for the deal than many traders expected. It had been long-awaited as part of a package to finance the acquisition of Capital Cities in the US for \$19 billion announced last August. There is still speculation that Disney may have to raise further debt to finance the \$10 billion cash element of the acquisition.
The first tranche is for \$1.3 billion, maturing March 27, 2001. It is to be priced at 35 basis points over Treasuries. The second tranche is also for \$1.3 billion, maturing March 27, 2006. It is to be priced at 47 basis points over Treasuries. Traders had initially expected a \$1.5 billion global offering with a spread of between 38-40 basis points over Treasuries for the first tranche and 50 basis points for the second.
According to reports last night, the five-year tranche had been most popular among European investors, while the ten-year tranche had appealed to US institutions.
Yesterday's deal is the first global bond issued by Disney. If it had not been split into two tranches, it would have been the largest corporate global bond ever. Further issues from Disney are expected. Analysts in New York last night said that following the acquisition Disney may still have to sell some assets to pay down debt.
The firm was nearly debt-free before the acquisition, but now carries \$16 billion in goodwill and possibly as much as \$21 billion in debt, according to one analyst.

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of security

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES			
FT-SE 100	3797.0	(+8.7)	
Yield	4.9%		
FT-SE All Share	1943.51	(+3.91)	
Nickel	20700.92	(-26.91)	
New York	5828.33	(+1.45)	
Dow Jones	5828.33	(+1.45)	
S&P Composite	5828.33	(+1.45)	
US RATE			
Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)	
Long Bond	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)	
Yield	6.63%	(6.62%)	
LONDON MONEY			
3-mth interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)	
Life long gilt	104 1/2%	(105 1/2%)	
STERLING			
New York	1.5335*	(1.5360)	
London	1.5341	(1.5363)	
DM	2.2851	(2.2838)	
FF	7.7740	(7.7870)	
Sfr	1.8219	(1.8364)	
Yen	163.85	(163.82)	
E Index	83.9	(84.0)	
DOLLAR			
London	1.4763*	(1.4800)	
DM	5.0685*	(5.0730)	
FF	1.1942*	(1.1975)	
Yen	106.81*	(106.83)	
E Index	85.4	(85.7)	
NORTH SEA OIL			
Brent 15-day (Jun)	\$18.35	(\$17.80)	
GOLD			
London close	\$397.50	(\$396.05)	

Guinness in £460m buyback of shares

By Eric Reguly
GUINNESS yesterday paid £460.5 million to buy back 100 million shares but said the move would not affect its ability to make a significant acquisition. The deal, at Thursday's 450.5p closing price, was equivalent to 4.9 per cent of Guinness's share capital.
LVMH Moët Hennessy, the French drinks and luxury goods group which owns just under 50 per cent of Guinness, did not tender any of its shares. Its ownership, as a result, rises to 21 per cent. Charles Winston, an analyst with BZW, said the buyback would enhance current year earnings by about 1 per cent. It will increase debt from £1.2 billion to about £1.7 billion, taking gearing from 28 per cent to 46 per cent.
Tony Greener, chairman, said: "Guinness has enormous financial strength and can take more gearing. It [the buyback] does not inhibit us in any way from making acquisitions if they come along."
Heavy turnover in Guinness helped stock market turnover surge to its best level this year of 1.1 billion shares.

Glaxo Wellcome report shows £2.15m for Sykes

By Eric Reguly
SIR RICHARD SYKES, chief executive of Glaxo Wellcome, received £2.15 million in salary and other payments in the 18 months to the end of December, the annual report, published yesterday, revealed.
The figures span an 18-month period because the group changed its year-end after Glaxo's £9.1 billion purchase in 1995 of Wellcome.
Of Sir Richard's total, £1.12 million was salary and £770,000 a one-off payment to terminate an old incentive scheme. He also received a £212,000 performance bonus and £41,000 of benefits. In the 12 months to the end of June 1994, total remuneration was £931,000. His base salary in the current year is £300,000 and he has 433,000 share options, whose average exercise price is 650p. The shares closed down 2p, at 817p.
The second highest paid executive director was Jeremy Strachan, responsible for legal and corporate affairs. In the 18-month period, total remuneration was £1.06 million, of which £514,000 was salary and £414,000 payment to terminate the old incentive scheme.

Bonuses lift NatWest directors' pay

By Our Banking Correspondent
NATWEST directors had their salaries frozen last year, but most enjoyed substantial increases to their total pay as a result of performance-related bonuses.
John Tugwell, the chairman and chief executive of Bancorp, NatWest's US subsidiary, saw his total pay fall from £1.46 million to £1.12 million, but the 1994 figure included payments made under a long-term incentive plan. He was the exception to the pay freeze, his salary increased by 3.6 per cent to £551,000. Mr Tugwell will leave the NatWest board later this year when he moves with Bancorp to its new owner, Fleet Financial.
Derek Wanless, NatWest's chief executive, was paid a salary of £350,000, but a performance-related bonus of £200,000 and other benefits gave him a total pay rise of 19 per cent to £594,000.
The best-paid UK-based director was Martin Owen, chief executive of NatWest Markets. He enjoyed a 26 per cent total pay rise to £617,000 including a £277,000 bonus. Lord Alexander, the chairman, was paid 8.8 per cent more at £454,000. His bonus was £135,000, up on the previous year's £100,000. John Melbourn, deputy chief executive, was paid 15.8 per cent more at £476,000.
Martin Gray, chief executive of NatWest UK, suffered a fall in his pay from £314,000 to £310,000.
Douglas Hurd, former Foreign Secretary, received £62,000 for his first two-and-a-half months as deputy chairman of NatWest Markets. The benefits of non-executive directors fell.
Wanless: overall increase

**122%*
GROWTH**

February 1996

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Year	1	2	3	4	5
Positions in UK Smaller Companies	5	1	1	3	13
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* Figures are on an after-tax basis. Not shown: rounded. Based on 12.5%.

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TIM 23/03/96

Fund managers set to back the rat-catcher

Curiouser and curiouser. After the Granada/Forte epic, the City has come up with a sort of corporate sideshow. Last month Rentokil, whose roots are steeped in rat poison, launched a near £2 billion takeover bid for BET, the service conglomerate whose operations range from the hire of towels to the hire of cranes.

I am not, I confess, particularly familiar with either of these companies but, merely by observing developments, one's learning curve inevitably improves. Originally, we are invited to believe, Rentokil favoured an agreed deal. Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil, made contact with Sir Christopher Harding, chairman of BET. In the event, John Clark, BET's chief executive, was in Houston and, during the run up to official disclosure of the approach, startlingly perceptive (for want of a stronger phrase) served to renege BET's shares by some 15 per cent.

The Stock Exchange, true to form, launched an investigation and, presumably, is in touch with

the usual suspects. The Takeover Panel, with an admittedly less complex remit, also held an inquiry and, in the space of a week, publicly rebuked Lazard's advisers to Rentokil. According to the Panel, Lazard had failed to keep it fully informed of Rentokil's intentions and should have acted more quickly to prevent a false market in BET's shares.

No sooner did Rentokil reveal its wish to parley than it abandoned this tactic in favour of a hostile bid based on a cash and share package which, taking Rentokil at 35p, currently values BET at 200.2p. This is accompanied by an all-cash alternative of 179.5p.

BET promptly described the terms as "wholly inadequate" and speculation had it that the company was considering basing its defence on a major restructuring operation, including disposals worth some £300 million. Such speculation, unlike the bid speculation, proved wrong. This would appear fortunate because it is highly debatable whether BET's parts are worth

more than the price Rentokil has offered for the whole.

From the outset, neither Thompson nor Clark agreed on anything, including the potential overlap between the two companies. Thompson proclaimed the overlap was in the region of 70 per cent; Clark argued it was nearer 25 per cent. Insults were exchanged. Rentokil charged BET's management with having "demonstrably failed to enhance shareholder value". BET retorted that Rentokil's offer revealed "a muddled plan to create an unfocused conglomerate".

It was at this point, a matter of days after Rentokil opted for a hostile approach, that it proposed to BET that it should purchase just 75 per cent of the company in return for a recommendation. Feelers were put out by Nicholas Jones of Lazard's who suggested to Barings, advisers to BET, that discussions should focus on Rentokil's acquisition of BET's textile services, distribution and electronic security operations. BET promptly rejected the proposal on the grounds that



MELVYN MARCKUS

the businesses Rentokil wanted to acquire were central to the company's strategy. As BET put it: "This would have left shareholders without an offer and the company with only a quarter of its operations." Under the proposal, BET would have retained its plant hire, resort management and conference operations, which account for about 25 per cent of sales. Any deal would probably have left BET with a

significant capital gains tax liability.

Thompson's reaction was that he was "disappointed" that BET had rejected the opportunity to enter into discussions, a move "surely against the best interests of BET shareholders". Thompson, brimming with munificence, added that Rentokil had been prepared to examine a number of possibilities to avoid leaving BET with a large tax liability. Such possibilities included the acquisition of the whole company and a subsequent spin-off of the parts Rentokil did not want.

This approach, to all intents and purposes, was perceived as strictly for the birds: the birds being those institutional shareholders who were not entirely happy about Rentokil's extravagance. Rentokil, it may be recalled, is the company that has achieved 20 per cent growth per annum for the best part of a decade and a half. The secrets of Rentokil's success, under Thompson, have been a host of bolt-on acquisitions, organic growth and the creation of a well-trained

and well-equipped blue collar workforce. BET, in contrast, faced bankruptcy during the early Nineties, the legacy of wild takeover flings during the Eighties. Clark, an ex-US Marine, was called in to rationalise operations, a task that culminated in last Thursday's forecast that pre-tax profits will rise 28 per cent this year to £142 million. As Clark delicately put it: "We came in to fix this mess and now it's really growing."

It is no secret that several institutions, sensitive to the controversy that surrounded their support for the creation of a Granada/Forte conglomerate, would have liked to have seen an agreed deal. As one fund manager informed the *Financial Times*, fees — expected to total more than £100 million — will soon equate to "the market capitalisation of a decent sized company." Equally eye-catching were the headlines to the effect that Clark will receive more than £5 million if Rentokil's bid succeeds. This embraces some £3 million from a medium-term incentive scheme, the targets of

which have been triggered by the offer price. Clark is expected to garner a profit of more than £1 million on share options and he also enjoys a three-year rolling contract, his annual salary being £480,000. Lord Tebbit, a non-executive director of BET and chairman of the company's remuneration committee, responded: "There was not a long queue of suitable applicants for the post when we recruited him in 1991."

The potential rewards for Clark (who is, after all, opposing the bid) are reputed to have "provoked outrage" among certain anonymous institutions. Strange, therefore, that such institutions did not oppose the plan when it was introduced in the autumn of 1993. One sure way of preventing Clark from reaping his rewards would be to reject Rentokil's bid, even if the terms are modestly increased. I jest. The reality is that fund managers are almost certainly going to accept, as they almost always do. That is why BET's shares, at 204p, are standing at a modest premium.

Builder's profits slump

Wilson Connolly, the Midlands builder, reported a 41 per cent slump in pre-tax profits.

Lynn Wilson, chairman, said 1995 had fallen short of expectations after hopes of recovery faltered and left the company with profits before tax of £22.5 million for the year to December 31.

The final dividend, payable June 3, was set at 3.18p, which maintained the total at 4.54p.

The company was beset by lower house sales and also falling prices on those it did sell.

Profit margins were further affected by increases in building costs which fed through from the previous year.

GWR deals

GWR Group, the commercial radio operator, is looking to expand in the UK and New Zealand in deals worth a combined total of up to £62.2 million. It wants 75 per cent of Radio New Zealand for NZ\$85 million (£37.9 million) and has launched a £24.3 million agreed offer for East Anglian Radio. Shares eased 5p to 246p.

Tempus, page 30

NTC forecast

Consumer activity should pick up around the middle of this year, according to NTC, the business research organisation.

C E Heath to split and float its computer services arm

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

CE HEATH, the insurance broker whose shares have fallen almost £3 in two years, has confirmed plans to split its broking and computer services divisions and float the latter under the name of Rebus on April 17.

Peter Presland, Heath's outgoing chief executive will head the computer division and his salary will be reduced from £195,000 to £150,000. However, he will walk away with a package of £300,000 to compensate him for the severance of his three-year rolling contract with Heath. He will also remain on the board of Heath as a non-executive director on a salary of £15,000 a year.

His compensation package is bound to anger some small shareholders who 18 months ago reacted furiously to a loyalty bonus package worth a total of £1.8 million paid to John Mackenzie Green (then managing director and now Heath chief executive) and Mr Presland. The bonus came at a time when Heath had made a small pre-tax profit of £3.84 million and a post-tax loss for the 1993-94 financial year of £8.4 million.

Shareholders will be offered one Rebus share for every

Heath share they hold. Heath is subscribing for £4.5 million worth of new shares in Rebus, which it will keep for at least one year.

Heath, which will continue to be listed, will concentrate on broking.

Paul Hughes, group finance director, said the exact number of shares depended on the opening price at flotation, but Heath would hold a maximum 9.5 per cent of Rebus shares.

Mr Hughes said the company's market capitalisation was between £50 million and £55 million. With 68 million shares in issue, this would put the value of Rebus shares at between 74p and 80p each. Rebus is expected to post a pre-tax, pre-exceptionals profit of £6.5 million for the year to the end of this month.

Heath said rates in the UK market had been falling and competition "remained strong". Heath will pay a total dividend for 1995 of 6p in August, down from 11p last year, and Rebus will pay a dividend of 1.16p in July.

Heath shares rose by 2p to 170p.

Tempus, page 30



Mike Handley expects margins to recover next year

BA contract for General Electric

By ROSS TIEMAN
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

GENERAL ELECTRIC has secured a £1.5 billion follow-on contract to repair and overhaul engines for the entire British Airways fleet of jet airliners.

The work, won in the face of competition from engine overhaul companies throughout the world, will be undertaken at the General Electric Aircraft Engine Services plant at Nantgarw, Mid Glamorgan. GE bought the operation for £274 million in 1991, in a deal that coincided with a BA decision to forgo its long-term key engine supplier, Rolls-Royce. In order to buy GE engines to power the airline's new Boeing 777 sub-jumbos.

Under the agreement, GE will overhaul and repair engines ranging from the Rolls-Royce Olympus units that power BA's Concorde to the CFM units on its Airbus A320s.

George Duncanson, the GE's managing director, said that the BA contract, and the resulting workload, would "serve as a springboard for GE engine services' global growth strategy."

McBride still suffering

MCBRIDE, the supplier of private label household and personal care products that issued a profits warning in January, yesterday reported a sharp fall in first half earnings and said margins have not yet recovered as well as expected.

In the six months to the end of December pre-tax profits fell to £8 million from £14.7 million. At the operating level, profits slipped to £16.2 million (£20.2 million). The 22.5p interim is in line with last year's flotation forecast. Mike Handley, group managing director, said: "Next year, margins are expected to recover as a result of the full impact of this year's selling price increases, generally stable raw material and packaging prices, reduction in the cost base and the benefit of sales growth."

TOURIST RATES

Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.25
Belgium Sch	15.49
Canada \$	45.40
Cyprus Cyp	2.08
Cyprus Cyp	0.701
Denmark Kr	8.56
Finland Mk	7.09
France Fr	8.21
Germany DM	2.25
Greece Dr	362.00
Hong Kong \$	12.51
Ireland Pt	1.02
Israel Sh	5.1500
Italy Lira	2514.00
Japan Yen	173.50
Malta	0.594
Netherlands Gld	2.087
New Zealand \$	2.30
Norway Kr	10.47
Portugal Esc	248.50
S Africa Rd	8.55
Spain Ptas	166.00
Sweden Kr	10.85
Switzerland Fr	1.97
Turkey Lira	111312
USA \$	1.632

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Like a college of cardinals, the process was shrouded in secrecy and surrounded by rumours of dark and bitter plots. But finally the puff of white smoke appeared and GEC had a successor to Lord Weinstock...

How the mantle was passed — *Business, The Sunday Times* tomorrow

THE SUNDAY TIMES

AMIS THE FINAL CHAPTER



When Kingsley Amis fell ill, he turned for companionship to his friend Eric Jacobs. But after the 'Oldest Devil' died, Jacobs was barred from the funeral. Find out why in the second exclusive extract from the Amis Diaries, in *News Review* tomorrow



FIRE IN THE SOLE

Hailed as the new Valentino, Joaquín Cortés is the Flamenco king with the world at his feet. Britain gets its first glimpse of the sensual Spaniard at Sadler's Wells tomorrow. Georgina Howell profiles him in the *Magazine*

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS



BET is a multinational support services group providing specialist outsourcing to industrial, commercial and public sector customers

Profit forecast update

FREephone 0800 771177

BET is subject to a bid from Rentokil.

Sir Christopher Harding, Chairman of BET, can be heard on the above freephone number with an updated message for shareholders.

The directors of BET Public Limited Company accept responsibility for the information contained in this advertisement. In the best of the knowledge and belief of the directors of BET Public Limited Company who have taken all reasonable care to ensure that such is the case, the information contained hereon is true and correct and does not contain anything likely to affect the proper price of the shares.

السنة الأولى

A WORKING WEEK FOR: ROBERT WILSON

Mining chief with a mountain to climb

Jon Ashworth extracts globe-trotting details from the man who clocked up 125,000 miles in the air during merger negotiations alone

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

FOURTEEN thousand feet up a mountain in Indonesia is no place to make the mining discovery of the century. One would not expect to find a cluster of diamond pipes under a lake in Canada's frozen north.

Jungle or ice, the mining engineers will devise a way of reaching their hidden treasure. And the man who pushes the button to start things rolling might very well be Robert Wilson.

Wilson, 52, is probably the most powerful man in world mining today. He has just clinched the mammoth merger of two of the great mining houses, RTZ, based in London, with tentacles reaching around the globe, and CRA, based in Melbourne, and a household name on the Pacific Rim. As chief executive of RTZ-CRA, with a market capitalisation of \$20 billion, and 44,000 employees, Wilson is orchestrating a round of musical chairs which has senior executives shuffling between the UK, Australia, Namibia and America. Hectic times lie ahead.

Grasberg mountain in Irian Jaya is one of the most impressive feats of mining one is ever likely to encounter. Wilson visited the site for the first time last year, and was suitably awed. "It's literally at the top of a mountain," he says, relaxing in an office that could not be more removed from the dust and heat of the rockface. "The mine site tends to get immersed in clouds by midday, and there is heavy rainfall as well. It's an extraordinarily remote location. The feeling of remoteness is quite different from any other mine site I've ever been to."

The Grasberg visit was part of a weekly routine that might take in a whirlwind tour of America, a board meeting in London, a multicountry video conference, and a night at the opera. Wilson took the easy way up the mountain — by helicopter — soaring past rainforest and mangroves towards the peak, which is literally being torn apart. The mine site at 14,000ft leads to a mill at 9,000ft, from where copper, gold and silver are sent sloshing down a pipeline to the coast.

Over the border in Papua New Guinea, on remote Bougainville Island, is a location that Wilson will not be putting on his weekly touring list. Bougainville is a name that the planners at RTZ would just as soon forget. In 1972, construction began on what was the Grasberg of its day, a fabulously rich goldmine, carved out of densest jungle.

Ethnic clashes began to take their toll, and RTZ was forced to pull out, leaving machinery, housing, vehicles — everything. No one has been back since. "It's been totally deserted by the company since 1989," says Wilson. "Quite what a state things are in is a bit difficult to judge, because we haven't had anybody up there since. It could be rehabilitated, I believe."

Geologists were careless in finding a deposit under a lake

hesitate to think what the cost would be. The evacuation took place down a narrow corridor leading 25 miles to the coast. "The company had built a road through the jungle, through the mountain, into the mine site. I would guess that road might well substantially need rebuilding now, because of landslides, because effectively a jungle takes over again if you just neglect it for too long."

Wilson encountered a different type of jungle earlier this month, when he unveiled the company's latest financial results. The logistics of running a global mining house were only too apparent. After a board meeting which saw directors fly in from around the world, Leon Davis, soon to take up residence in London as Wilson's right-hand man, flew back to Australia with Chris Bull, group finance director. They arrived in Melbourne on Thursday morning, leaving little time before the results flashed up at 2pm local time. In London, where it was 3am, staff diligently began issuing press releases. "Lots of people started their day at 3am," says Wilson. "I wasn't one of them."

Wilson and his team had an action-packed morning, briefing analysts at 8am, fund managers at 10am and journalists at noon. The presentations were linked by video-conference with the redoubtable Davis and Bull, sitting in a studio in Melbourne. Wilson was suitably impressed by their stamina. "By the time we finished the last meeting, which was around about 1pm or even a bit after that, it was past midnight over there, and those guys had been at it all day."

Long-haul travel is unavoidable at a group which has interests in so

many countries. So far this year, Wilson has visited sites at Palabora and Richards Bay in South Africa. He leaves this weekend for America, starting in New York, where he will brief financiers, then proceeding to an investment mining conference in Phoenix, Arizona. A visit to Los Angeles rounds off a week-long trip. "We don't have a company plane," says Wilson. "We have no corporate planes out of RTZ, except for local site planes where it may be difficult in terms of travel. The company occasionally chartered aircraft to cope with difficult itineraries."

Wilson clocked up 125,000 air miles negotiating the CRA merger, and has his seating preferences down to a tee. He spends between a quarter and a third of the year travelling abroad on trips of a comparatively short duration. Two or three directors spend well over half the year away from the UK. "It's simply a function of the nature of our business. We're spread all over the globe, and as long as we want to try and run this business from a very small head office, then it means that people are going to have to spend a lot of time travelling."

Video-conferencing points the way forward. "I can see a time in the future when our results' presentation is going to be a full 24-hour cycle, starting in Australia and finishing up in the States." Employees are treated to more mundane means of communication. "People have the great excitement of watching me on a video talking to them about whatever happens to be the interest of the day. But nothing is a proper substitute for face-to-face contact."

No two weeks are the same at RTZ-CRA, but Wilson has something approaching a typical day. He is usually at his desk by 8.30am until the evening "whatever it needs to be". He does not have far to travel. "I used to live in Surrey, but it got to the point where I was moving up on Monday, going back on Friday, so we decided to move up lock, stock and barrel." He and his wife live in Kensington. They have a son away at school, and a daughter at university.

Wilson does not come across as someone who lets his hair down outside office hours — he won't even admit to a thrill at seeing machinery in action — but he does have some outside interests. His eyes light up at the mention of opera — one might well run him in at Covent Garden — and he enjoys classical concerts. "I don't think anyone wants to live under the continuous pressure of working 16 hours a day. I don't think

that's good for anybody. There needs to be some sort of mix of a normal social life. There are periods, obviously, when you have to live pretty intensely. Concluding the merger deal with CRA was rather demanding, but you don't have to live like that all the time."

Wilson succeeds Sir Derek Birkin as chairman of RTZ-CRA in December. He enthuses about the potential of India, Latin America and the Pacific Rim, and of the scope for a dozen new projects. "The mining industry is really not that massive an industry worldwide, and a comparatively small number of

mines make most of the money. I see our business as actually getting into as many of those really high-quality, long-term, profitable, mine opportunities, rather than force-fitting us into a company which is going to have a predetermined and necessarily arbitrary commodity base."

The enlarged RTZ-CRA is most heavily orientated towards Australia/New Zealand and North America, with 39 per cent and 32 per cent of sales revenue apiece. Opportunities in India and elsewhere may help to balance the portfolio. "Foreign mining companies haven't been welcome in India until recently. But there clearly is potential for iron ore projects, for coal projects, mineral sands, maybe diamonds, bauxite."

One of the group's most exciting new finds is a diamond strike involving a cluster of Kimberlite pipes in Canada's Northwest Territories. Test drilling at the site suggests it could be producing 5 per cent of the world's gemstones within five years, if it proves viable. The main drawback is the location — under a lake in inhospitable terrain. "Our geologists were a bit careless in finding a deposit under a lake rather than on dry ground. But it's nearly all lakes up there."

The interview at an end, Wilson stands to shake hands, his suit immaculate, his office steeped in grandeur. On Grasberg, half a world away, dust flies and machinery roars. And on distant Bougainville, jungle entwines with rusting metal, cloaked in silence.



The day on which Robert Wilson recently unveiled his company's results was a long one. "Lots of people started their day at 3am," he said. "I wasn't one of them"

HIDDEN ASSETS

Arched pleasure concealed in Showering's garden

Sarah Cunningham on the view from the viaduct that few get a chance to see

A DISUSED railway viaduct in Somerset has to be Allied Domecq's most whimsical asset. Miles from any of the drinks group's offices or factories, the company happens to own the viaduct because of the passion for gardening of Francis Showering, the inventor of Babycham.

The viaduct, in Shepton Mallet, stopped bearing trains more than 30 years ago, a victim of the Beeching cuts to the national rail network in the 1960s. A splendid, curving, 300-yard stretch of line owned by what was Somerset and Dorset Railways — known to locals as the "Slow and Dirty" — it was sold to the Showering drinks company for the grand sum of £5.

Francis Showering and his brothers, millionaires from the success of the sweet and fizzy "ladies drink" Babycham, bought it because it backed on to the company's

extensive gardens behind Kilver Court, its headquarters. The Grade II listed Victorian viaduct's brick-lined arches made a perfect backdrop to the 3.5 acres of formal gardens which were Francis Showering's pride and joy, explains Jean Curtis, property administrator for Allied Domecq.

The Showering company was bought by Allied Breweries, the original Allied drinks group, in 1968. After a series of acquisitions, it became Allied Lyons, and, in 1994, Allied Domecq.

The Babycham business was sold in 1992 to a management buyout team, and has since been bought by the cider makers Matthew Clark. The canny managers, as part of the buyout deal,

kept Kilver Court and its gardens, but made Allied keep the expensive-to-maintain viaduct.

The building and gardens were bought last July by Mulberry, the fashion company. On Monday, the Princess Royal will officially open Kilver House as its new corporate headquarters. So Mulberry staff will have the benefit of the gardens in which to eat their lunchtime sandwiches, with a backdrop courtesy of Allied Domecq.

Mrs Curtis was sorry when she had to leave the old Showering offices after some 30 happy years. She now works in Allied Domecq offices in Bristol, while still ensuring, on behalf of the company, that the

viaduct is kept in good condition. Its stone and brick surface is regularly cleaned and its top has been asphalted so that frost could not penetrate the stone and damage the structure. The rails themselves are long gone and the viaduct tapers at either end into grass banks.

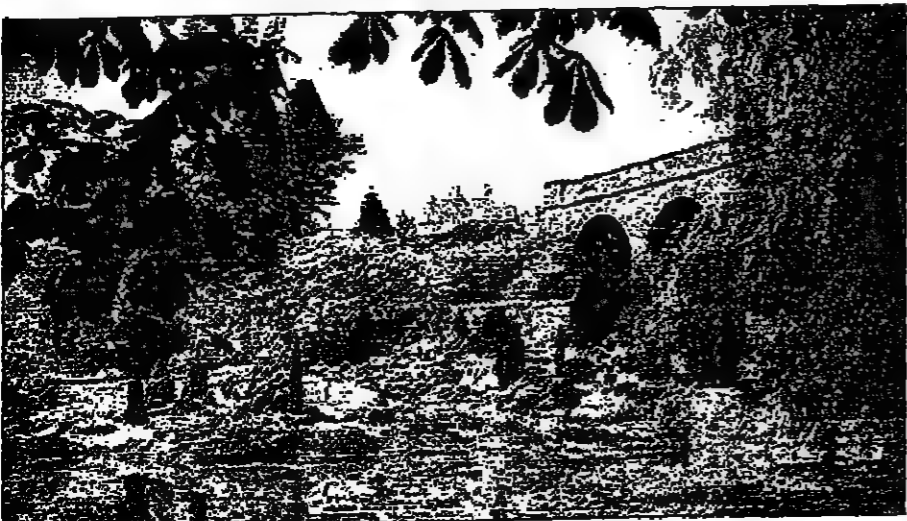
The 50ft-high viaduct is not open to the public. Mrs Curtis, who still lives in Shepton Mallet, is one of the few people allowed on to it and says the climb up the embankment gives a lovely view of the Mendip Hills.

In spite of the cleaning, time has taken a toll of the structure, and last year it was decided to repair it. English Heritage has stepped in with a grant to provide about 40 per cent of the £277,000 needed to ensure the viaduct's future. Work should finish in the autumn.

Mulberry is now in talks with Allied Domecq about buying the viaduct. It plans to use the structure as part of its 25th anniversary celebration in July, draping the whole thing in Mulberry fabric and staging an operatic performance on top.

Mulberry is restoring the gardens, under the guidance of its chairman and designer Roger Haul. The original lawns, waterfall, rock garden and paths are being preserved, and young oak and beech trees have been planted near the viaduct, to soften its appearance.

Mulberry is opening the gardens to the public for one day on May 26. A visit is in order for fans of gardening, whimsy and fine Victorian industrial architecture.



The tranquillity of the viaduct has been undisturbed by trains for more than 30 years

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TESSA DILEMMA, 34

Fixed-rate Tessa 2 may not look so good in five years

WEEKEND MONEY

VOTES FIGHT 33

Heirs of N&P savers seek bonus share



Homeowners face summer of subsidence

Marianne Curphey and Sara McConnell say insurers are taking no chances this year

Insurers are giving warning that thousands of homeowners face another summer of subsidence and structural damage because the winter has not been wet enough to replace moisture in clay soil, common in the South East.

The large insurers have each paid about £20 million to policyholders whose houses shifted and cracked when the earth around the foundations dried out in the heat wave.

"The winter has just not been wet enough. Unless we get a lot more rain subsidence claims are likely to be high again this year," said David Prusser, chief executive of Legal & General.

Ian Brent-Pitt, subsidence claims manager at Direct Line, agreed. "We could see it happening again this summer. During last year's drought the worst affected areas were Southampton, parts of Hampshire, north London, Guildford, Kent, the Midlands, Manchester and Yorkshire. People with homes built on clay are worst affected.

"The other problem is caused by trees: conifers, poplars, flowering cherry trees and willows are the worst. A large tree can take 10,000 gallons of water out of the soil every year - that is equivalent to a full tanker. Unfortunately, people plant trees close to their homes and use conifers as a screen, with the result that they upset the water balance in the soil under the house. People planning to plant trees

in the Easter holidays should think carefully about the effect this will have on their house foundations." Structural engineers, who in the past used underpinning as the solution to all subsidence problems, are now more likely to monitor earth movements before taking action.

Even when a tree has been proved to be the culprit, the solution is not always simple. "Although trees can be pruned and managed to reduce their demand for water, some have preservation orders on them and we cannot touch them," Mr Brent-Pitt said.

Other causes of subsidence

A large tree can use 10,000 gallons of water a year

are unrelated to hot weather. Underground pipes leaking or poor drainage beneath the house can cause the soil to become waterlogged and to sink. This is particularly prevalent in Manchester. In parts of London, light industry formerly removed large quantities of water from the soil.

Homeowners in the most subsidence-prone areas face paying up to three times the going rate for their buildings insurance and a long search

for cover. Some insurers are "redlining" certain areas where they refuse cover altogether, while others demand that homeowners commission expensive structural engineers' reports before getting cover.

Insurers are stepping up their use of sophisticated geological data which allow them to pinpoint the riskiest areas. Premiums are still based on postcodes, but insurers now use the first letter of the second part of postcodes as well as the first part, which they started using in 1991. This narrows the number of houses down to in each area to about 1,500. Some use the whole postcode, targeting just a few homes. Few insurers now raise buildings premiums across the board as they used to, targeting instead the most risky areas within postcodes for rises.

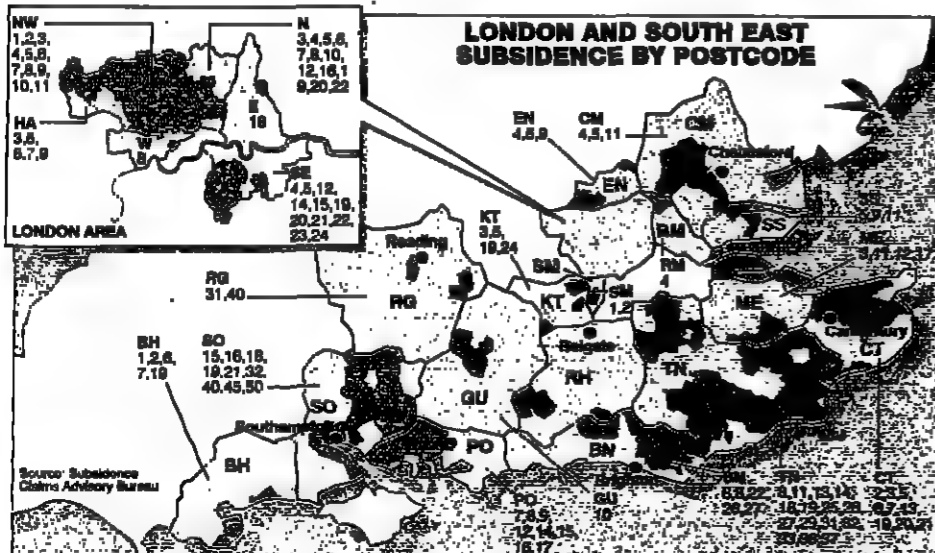
This targeting has taken some households out of high-risk categories, cutting their premiums substantially. Brian Bundy, branch director at C. E. Heath, the broker, said: "Some of our clients have had their premiums cut by half." But the risky remainder will see rises in premiums and long searches for cover. "I know some insurers are redlining because I have clients who have tried and been told they can't get insurance in their area," said Mr Bundy.

Robert Hooker of the Subsidence Claims Advisory Bureau said: "There are constantly more areas where there is redlining." No insurer

will admit to redlining of whole areas but they admit there are certain properties they do not want to cover. Sellers trying to move as the housing market improves are finding their properties blighted by valuers pointing out cracks and suggesting they could be subsidence.

In a majority of cases, the cracks will be harmless. But by then, prospective buyers will have gone elsewhere rather than be forced to spend several hundred pounds on a structural survey to satisfy their mortgage lender. Valuers are desperate to avoid being sued by lenders for not noticing structural defects. Lenders took action against a number of surveyors in the early 1990s, claiming they had overvalued properties, causing lenders losses. Mr Bundy said: "Surveyors are very careful. They see a crack and see a possible subsidence claim. Ten years ago they wouldn't have worried." Geoff Holden of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors said valuers would not immediately diagnose subsidence but would tell a buyer to take further advice.

□ The Subsidence Claims Advisory Bureau, (01424) 733721, has a brochure and cassette, *Subsidence, Insurance and Your Home*.



Carried away by water bids

Shareholders in water companies may feel bemused. In Leeds, Trevor Newton, accountant and managing director of Yorkshire Water, has fallen on his sword ahead of a public inquiry set up by the company to flagellate itself and seek absolution. Yet the shares boom. In London, Mike Hoffman, dynamic chief executive of Thames Water, left the industry suddenly on Thursday, drawing a line under Thames's long, disastrous foray into engineering construction. The shares rose. Further West, Severn Trent joined Wessex in a race to take over South West, perennial poor relation of the ten privatised groups.

Bemused as we may be, these seemingly unconnected events are all part of a process started in 1989, in guidance given to the companies at privatisation. If they were competent, they were guaranteed decent returns for at least five years, to persuade investors to sink £30 billion to bring our creaking water and sewage system up to scratch. Then water would revert to being dull and heavily regulated, so they better diversify to give some "medium-term" fizz.

Thames jumped in first, buying PWT, a big but unprofitable international water contractor, for a song. Anglian and Yorkshire were highly cautious. But Sir Gordon Jones, Yorkshire's retiring chairman, knighted for his patient skill in leading the industry to privatisation, later revealed that his board team had to devote a third of its time to diversification, a third to regulators and just a third actually to run the utility. This was typical. Creative openings in operating

PERSONAL INVESTOR



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

and financing the utilities turned out to be a lot bigger than expected. Diversification was often a costly failure. Finance directors floated to the top. Empire builders from outside fell like ninespins. From Northumbrian via North West to Severn Trent, where John Bellak, its engaging but prickly chairman, was bagged by City critics after an expensive move into solid waste. Mr Hoffman turned his zeal back to the core, scoring a success with the Thames ring main, but those loss-breeding bad buys kept coming back to haunt him. Mr Newton, a master of the regulatory game, was complacent about the basics in an area normally cushioned by high rainfall.

A new generation of water bosses, plus a few canny originals, learnt crucial lessons at the feet of Ian Byatt, their regulator. Their main asset is skill at running utilities. That embraces innovative solutions to sewage problems, but also transferable skills in billing, service, information technology, cost-cut-

ting and, not least, relations with customers of a local monopoly.

Brussels has imposed more investment, extending growth potential. Most drastically, however, expiry of golden shares has transferred power to grasping City fund managers, upsetting the balance between investors, regulators and customers. To satisfy all, big financial risks have to be taken, gearing up with debt. Only Wessex was fully prepared, focusing effort on its utility and local relations, while bringing in a big American partner to finance expansion into waste. Others are catching up. Welsh, a quick learner, and North West have bought local power companies.

People in the South West were badly served by privatisation. Relatively few locals had to pay dearly to cure water scarcities and leagues of dirty beaches for the benefit of summer visitors. A political drive to stem soaring prices trimmed investment at the last review. So Wessex and North West have much to offer: price cuts to locals, faster beach-cleaning to Surfers against Sewage.

They present Mr Byatt with a dilemma: he had set his heart against mergers among the ten. If he bends for the sake of Cornish folk, there will be others. Thames, under a caretaker regime, will court the City with cash to fend off adjacent French giant Générale des Eaux, which might also eye Southern. Takeover fever is ready for investors. But don't be carried away. Greater risk, and more stifling regulation under an ambitious new dozen of Ofwat, may be round the corner.

When the tree just had to go

Last August, as reported by *The Times*, Mary Burris came back from holiday to find a 5-ft crack in one of the interior walls of her house. The surveyor sent by Pearl, her insurer, identified a much-loved tree near the house as the culprit (Sara McConnell writes).

Two weeks ago, the tree was felled, much to Mrs Burris's regret. "It was such a lovely tree," she said. But if the surveyor's diagnosis proves right, the tree hid a destructive streak. Mrs Burris's daughter, Roisin McManus, said the original crack has since got wider and bigger and spread from one corner of the room to the other.

Now the family is waiting for Pearl to decide what to do next. The hope is that the problem will solve itself as rainfall restores moisture removed by the tree and the earth settles. The prospect of underpinning fills Mrs McManus with alarm. "If they suggest underpinning, my mother will be hysterical", she said.



Mary Burris: loved the tree

Weekend Money is edited by Anne Ashworth

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Karen Zagor on market history and forecasts for the coming years



All smiles: After the euphoria of John Major's election win in April 1992, disillusionment quickly set in, culminating in Norman Lamont pulling Britain out of the ERM in September

A good time to take stock of the equity phenomenon

The recent gyrations on Wall Street, and subsequent quiescence in London, have shaken investors out of their pleasant slumber after a year in which it seemed that equities could only go higher. The renewed instability offers a good opportunity for investors to pause to consider how equity markets have moved during the Nineties and where they are expected to go by the end of the century.

The recent market blip may be unsettling, but the losses were insignificant in comparison with the events of October 1987 when the Dow Jones industrial average, the main US market index, dropped 508 points or 22.6 per cent in one day, triggering a 10 per cent fall in the value of shares on the London Stock Exchange. Indeed, the 1980s were a decade of dramatic rises and falls as markets adjusted to an incredible boom, followed by recession, in the United States and Europe. The 1990s, in contrast, have proved calmer, so far.

The decade started on a dull note. At the beginning of January 1990, the FT-SE 100 was at 2,463.7, while the Dow Jones industrial average started the decade at 2,809.73. During the year, the dollar suffered a large loss in value, putting pressure on share prices around the world. The FT-Actuaries world index, which monitors world share prices, dropped more than 19 per cent in 1990, caused largely by the collapse of Tokyo,

which had briefly been the world's biggest stock market. The FT-Actuaries all-share index fell 1.5 per cent. In the United States, the Dow Jones industrial average lost 4.3 per cent.

The beginning of 1991 brought the Gulf War, which proved a turning point for markets. After the depression caused by the invasion of Kuwait, the quick Allied victory injected a taste of much-needed optimism. By late summer, both the FTSE 100 and the Dow Jones industrial average had inched back to their pre-1987-crash levels.

Despite steady declines through the end of the year, both indices ended 1991 much higher than they started. Spring of 1992 brought concern that a Labour government would harm investors and big business alike. But April 1992 brought an unexpected electoral victory for John Major, and the markets responded by rising steadily through June before falling back in late summer, partly over concern about ERM, which was stopping the Government expanding the economy out of recession.

In September, Norman Lamont took Britain out of ERM and equities posted steady gains through 1993 and into February 1994, when the FTSE 100 topped 3,500 to set a record high, setting the pinnacle on a three-year run.

Shortly thereafter sentiment weakened when the Federal Reserve raised interest rates in the US, sending the Dow

tumbling 96 points and the FT-SE 100 down 56. During most of 1994, buyers boycotted the market. By June the market had lost about 18 per cent of its value and the FT-SE 100 ended the year below 3,100.

The Kobe earthquake in Japan set 1995 off to a sober start. World markets were

oggy sector in the US which helped to end the year with an equity market rally.

As a result, UK equities started 1996 at their highest prices, in real terms, since records maintained by Barclays de Zoete Wedd began in 1919. The recent market swings have taken some of the

prices improved in real terms. On the other hand, if the general trend is upwards then savers would do well to continue to put money in regular amounts into shares.

So what do analysts expect of the market in the coming years? Market bulls expect it to continue to be supported by savers looking for long-term investments. With interest rates at exceedingly low levels, they expect the money to keep pouring into the market.

The accepted wisdom is that equities offer the best long-term home for savings. According to BZW, £100 invested in equities in 1945 with dividends reinvested net of basic rate tax would have grown to £21,814 at the end of 1995. The equivalent building society fund would be worth £10,040.

But some are starting to question whether this trend will continue. Robin Aspinall, chief economist at Panmure Gordon, says: "We've had thirty years or more of the cult of the equity. The outperformance of the equity market in that time was phenomenal, driven by the amount of money pouring into the market which distorted valuations. Now we are in a decade of transition and are marking time while the valuations have a chance to return to more reasonable levels, with the gap between gilts and equities narrowing."

Joe Rooney, global equities manager at Lehman Brothers, is more positive about the US market than the UK, although US equities have rallied more

than their UK counterparts in recent years.

"The fundamentals in the US are good. Inflation is low and companies are generating good levels of profitability and retaining a good deal of that profitability within the company to generate future earnings growth, so the market is not looking excessively priced," he says.

Mr Rooney believes the UK market looks heavily priced because British companies are not investing enough to safeguard their future profitability, while at the same time paying shareholders very high dividends. "If you took a point four years out, the probability is that the UK market will be lower than it is today," he says.

Allison Southey, global strategist at Nomura, believes that "in the next 15 years the overall attitude towards inflation will change and we will embrace it as a way to quash other problems, such as high unemployment. In the long term that will not be good for equities." It would be even worse for fixed interest investors.

These bearish sentiments do not mean that private investors should panic about their equity investments. It is, of course, quite possible that the bears will be proved wrong and equities will go from strength to strength. But this might be a good time to look very carefully at your portfolio, and perhaps to consider geographic diversification.



rocked amid fear that the earthquake would harm the Japanese economy. Former Barings trader Nick Leeson's misdeeds wiped billions off world markets in February on news of the Barings collapse. But the negative impact was offset by a flurry of takeover bids at home and a strong performance by the technol-

ogy sector in the US which helped to end the year with an equity market rally. Those who invested in 1968, the peak year before 1993, had to wait 25 years before share

A QUESTION OF MONEY

Ins and outs of APR can baffle any borrower

Pity poor, hapless APR. Designed to clear up the confusion over lending rates, it has failed to keep up with the cut and thrust of today's credit card, mortgage and personal loan markets and is itself now accused of being confusing.

Q What is annual percentage rate (APR)?

A Annual Percentage Rate is the compulsory measure of the cost of credit. It includes interest plus any other charges that consumers have to pay. It is meant to enable consumers to compare the true cost of credit, but, with changes in products, there are now many loopholes in APR rules.

Q How do the credit card issuers calculate APR?

A Credit card issuers use a formula to calculate APR. It takes account of compound interest (or interest charged on interest) each month for a year.

However, APR regulations pre-date the introduction of an annual fee, which has caused something of a mathematical headache.

The annual fee has to be converted into a percentage to allow it to be incorporated into an APR and that, says the industry's Credit Card Research Group, is an artificial calculation.

Other blips include disagreement among lenders as to whether an interest-free period (or the lack of one) should be included in the APR and disagreement about the credit limit at which an APR is calculated.

In 1992, all credit card issuers voluntarily agreed to use the same credit limit of £1,000. However, the Co-operative uses a limit of £3,000 on its low-interest Gold Card.

That lessens the impact of the £120 annual fee, since the more you borrow, the less the fee works out as a percentage. Similarly, American Express, which charges a £20 fee after the first year, quotes on a limit of £2,000.

Lenders say that borrowers should look at the monthly rate. However, be warned that 1.67 per cent a month sounds small, but, on an outstanding balance, can add up to more than 20 per cent a year.

It is best to think in terms of pounds and pence: the "cost of borrowing". Simply ask each lender how much it will cost you to borrow £1,000 over a year.

Q The APR on mortgages seems very low. Is this right?

A The Consumers' Association says that annual percentage rates on mortgages are "detached from reality". There are

now many mortgages on offer with low fixed or discounted rates in the early years, but the quoted APR will be misleading.

It will be artificially low because it has to be calculated as if the low rate applied for the entire mortgage term. In fact, once the fixed term ends, you will pay the much higher variable rate for the rest of the life of the mortgage. The Consumers' Association also claims that lenders leave out fees such as the mortgage indemnity guarantee.

Similarly, with endowment mortgages, the APR calculation will not include the cost of the endowment premiums because they are not paid to the mortgage lender.

Since the APR does not tell you the full story, it is better for borrowers to look at the actual monthly cost, both now and at the end of the discounted or fixed-rate period.

Q How do lenders calculate the APRs on overdrafts and personal loans?

A Bank overdrafts need careful watching. Calculation of the APR is not set by law, as it is for most other kinds of credit, and lenders tend to quote an effective annual rate — EAR — which does not include transaction charges levied for going into the red or those letters that the bank sends you. Lenders can also omit fees from their APR calculations.

The APR on personal loans should, in contrast, be a useful guide since the size of the debt and its length are fixed from the outset.

However, the increasing popularity of payment protection insurance has muddied the waters. When insurance is compulsory, the APR should reflect the cost. If, however, it is simply available or recommended, the cost can be excluded from the APR.

The redemption penalty for paying off a loan early will also not be included in the APR.

Q Will the method of calculation of APRs now be changed?

A Not in the short term. Two years ago, the Office of Fair Trading published a report on the Consumer Credit Act.

It included a specific recommendation that there be changes to the way in which APRs are calculated and disclosed to improve their usefulness for comparing credit terms. That has not been acted upon by the Government.

However the European Union is currently looking at proposals for a common method of calculating APRs.

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Revenue has eye on £17bn handouts

The Inland Revenue has this week pronounced on the taxation of building society takeover and conversion payouts which will enrich the nation to the tune of £17 billion this year and next.

The recipients of this bounty probably hoped that the topic of tax would not be raised. They will be disappointed to learn that, not only will such distributions be taxable, but also that the rules are less than straightforward. Thoroughly confusing would be one description for the statement from the Revenue, a body you will remember, supposedly engaged in the simplification of all its regulations.

Three different rules and two different kinds of tax will apply to the windfalls being given to savers and borrow-



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance
Editor

COMMENT

Why such a miscellany should be necessary is a mystery. Yesterday accountants searching for reasons could supply none.

If your society merges with another and you receive cash, this will be subject to income tax. However, if your society is taken over, or converts into a bank, capital gains tax will be payable on the cash you pocket, should your gains exceed your annual exemption of £6,000 (£6,300 from

April). If, instead, you get a package of free shares, there may also be a capital gains bill. But only if you sell the shares.

This means that thousands will have to pay on their slice of the £1.8 billion Cheltenham & Gloucester takeover money: one point that the Inland Revenue manages to make almost clear. Members of the Halifax, Woolwich, Alliance & Leicester and National & Provincial

can breathe again, provided they do not sell their shares.

Members of other societies which may, in the future, merge with their fellows will be less pleased to see their reward reduced by tax. They may press instead for a takeover which will give them tax-free cash or shares, as few individuals make gains of more than their exemption.

But their efforts may be in vain, after another Government announcement of the week. The Building Societies Bill, published on Monday, proposes to allow societies that wish to merge to ring-fence themselves against bids. Deloitte & Touche will be one of the accountancy firms pressing for clarification of the payout taxation rules. The Revenue

will, we hope, take less time about this task than over its deliberations on another type of building society payment. For several years, societies and other lenders have been offering cashbacks to give their mortgagees marketing allure.

The Inland Revenue has been repeatedly asked whether these payments (which can be as high as £10,000) were subject to capital gains tax. No firm answer was given.

Earlier this month, some societies were still of the view that the cash would not be taxable, if spent on votes in Habitat, say, rather than on a new five door saloon. Now we learn that cashbacks are, after all, not to be taxed, either as income or capital gains. There is just one question. Why did it take so long?

Fight for voting rights by heirs of N&P savers

An advertising campaign is under way, urging the 1.4 million members of the National & Provincial to give their assent to the Abbey National's £1.3 billion takeover of their society. But in the last few days a group of N&P savers has found that it is not entitled to vote in next month's poll, although it holds share accounts with voting rights, opened years before cut-off dates for takeover benefits.

The accounts qualify only for the fixed distribution of £500 worth of Abbey National free shares. They are excluded from the variable distribution, worth as much as £4,250, the reward for long-term savers.

Mr Ferguson senior died on

result of a controversial clause in the Building Societies Act that says only savers of two years' standing with a society may benefit from takeover or conversion windfalls. "Only members who survive until the vesting date, the day the deal is completed, can receive benefits as two-year savers," said the N&P.

But, as other building society conversion and takeover deals show, the two-year rule is open to interpretation. The payout to the N&P successors is itself a compromise reached after what the N&P calls "long conversations" between the N&P and the Building Societies Commission, the watchdog. Mr Ferguson, however, believes this ruling deprives his father's £20,000 estate of about £750 worth of benefits he had earned as a long-time saver with the society.

Mr Ferguson senior died on

December 5, 1995. As his son was not able to transfer his father's account containing £5,000 into his own name by December 31, he unwittingly lost the right to vote. (The N&P variable distribution is made up of a fixed £750 worth of free shares, plus 7 per cent of the account balance up to £50,000.)

At the time the account was transferred, on January 26 1996, Mr Ferguson was told "the entitlement to benefits"

was secure. The first mention that successors would receive only the fixed distribution came in a booklet, Share Accounts in the Sole Name of the Deceased, sent out in February.

Mr Ferguson said: "There will be widows of men who had their savings in their names only. The N&P should give all successors voting rights and full share entitlement." Fortunately, more favourable treatment is being

given to second named holders on joint accounts where the first named holder dies before the vesting date. These savers can qualify as joint account successors and will be entitled to the variable distribution, provided they meet the conditions.

The deadline for votes in the N&P takeover poll is midnight on April 6. Helpline 0345 697349.

ANNE ASHWORTH



Ian Ferguson failed to transfer his father's account in time

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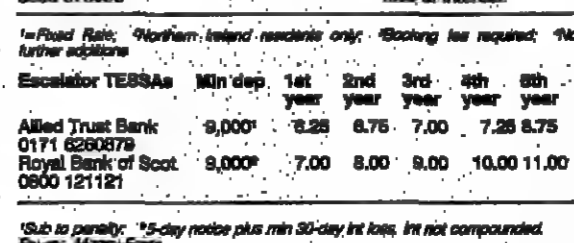
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Providers, too, seem divided over whether new issues of fixed rates should be going up or down. TSB, for example, has increased its fixed-rate Tessa from 7.05 per cent to 7.4 per cent, while West Bromwich has dropped its rate from 7.55 per cent to 7.10 per cent.



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The new tax rules that could launch a big paper chase

Karen Zagor on why it is vital to keep your financial records up to date for self-assessment

No one is safe from the new self-assessment tax rules. That is the message from the Inland Revenue, which this week launched an advertising campaign to warn all taxpayers to keep records of earnings and expenditure.

"The 20 million people who don't get tax returns don't have to worry about self-assessment," says a Revenue spokeswoman. "But they still need to keep records because if their circumstances change, they will need to have their paperwork in order."

Record-keeping for tax purposes can be onerous. In the US taxpayers are accustomed to hoarding shop receipts, cheque stubs, credit card bills and bank statements. Few people have a kind word to say about the process.

Heather Masri, a US graduate student, has passed on the burden of filling in tax forms to her husband. "Before I got married, I filed my own returns. The worst part of it was going through a shoe box filled with receipts and picking out all sorts of things to deduct from this massive pile of papers, then adding them up and realising that the total amounts were smaller than the standard deductions."

Ms Masri said it usually took her four hours to sort through the paperwork, without counting the extra time spent chasing missing forms. "I don't earn much money, but if you have anything extra, like a bank savings account, you have to get an addendum to the tax form. The bank doesn't always send you one so you have to go to the bank or post office for an extra form, which they never seem to have, and that takes time."

Maria Silber, also of New York, says the process is "so horrible that I pay an accountant \$250 a year to do my taxes, even though my situation is fairly straightforward. It's hard to keep up with every change in tax law, so you pay an accountant to know these things for you."

In the UK, the Revenue is assuring taxpayers that the new tax structure will not impose an undue burden. "For most people, record-keeping means keeping your P60 form. If you have got building society savings, keep your statements. For most employed people, it's not much. But the truth of the matter is that if you claim any allowances, including the married couple's allowance, you will have to be able to provide evidence that you qualify."

Hywel Jones of the Chartered Institute of Taxation writes in an article in the Consumers' Association's

Consumer Policy Review: "Many taxpayers who have completed their own tax returns in the past may feel intimidated by the volume of the new return." He says nine million taxpayers may be affected by the new system.

What do the rules say?

From April, you will have a legal obligation to keep all relevant records to complete an accurate tax return. You will need to keep records of tax you have paid and any records you may need to make a claim. Records need to be kept for UK pension or social security benefits as well as interest dividends or other income from UK savings, investments or trusts. You must also be able to provide evidence of capital gains or allowable losses.

Who will be most affected by self-assessment?

Anyone with tax complexities including the self-employed, company directors, higher-rate taxpayers who have savings or investment income and homeowners who let out their property.

RIGHT GUIDE

THE Inland Revenue has produced four booklets on Self Assessment.

To order the relevant guide, ring the Revenue's special Self Assessment response line on 0345 161514. Lines are open 24-hours a day. Employers will also be affected by the new rules. Clark Whitehill, chartered accountants, have prepared a special booklet. For a free copy ring: 0171 583 5757.

What records need to be kept?

□ Vouchers from your employer showing your pay, including bonuses and tax deducted. Documents relating to benefits in kind, expenses payments and share scheme arrangements. You should also keep payslips or pay statements, and the Revenue suggest keeping forms P2 and P2K (PAYE Coding Notices) to help to keep track of any earlier tax underpayments. Overseas earnings details and tax paid should be kept.

□ Documents from the Benefits Agency relating to a State pension or any other taxable social security benefits such as sick pay, statutory maternity pay and unemployment benefit.



Just the ticket: Heather Masri keeps all her bills in a shoe box ready to work out her US taxes

□ Certificates from your bank or building society showing tax deducted from any interest income.

□ Documents relating to savings or investment income including bank and building society passbooks or statements, dividend vouchers, unit trust tax vouchers, life insurance chargeable event certificates. If you use inheritance or windfall money to fund an investment, keep copies of any correspondence.

□ Documents relating to any other income, such as alimony or maintenance.

□ For capital gains or allowable losses, you must keep records on the purchase and sale, lease or exchange of assets. You should also retain details of any assets you have given away or put into trust.

What if I claim benefits?

You must be able to document any claims. For example, you may be asked to produce charitable deeds of covenant if you claim relief for donations to charity, or you may have to show a marriage certificate if you claim the married couple's allowance.

If you claim deductions for business expenses, you should keep bank statements, cheque stubs, money order counterfoils, certificates of interest paid, receipts and other records.

What if I do not maintain adequate records?

You can be fined up to £3,000 for each year in which you failed to maintain adequate records to support a tax return or claim. But the fines will not be levied automatically.

How long must I hold on to the receipts?

If you are an employee, you

must keep your paperwork for 22 months after the fixed filing date. The fixed filing date is January 31 after the end of the tax year.

If you are self-employed or run your own business, you

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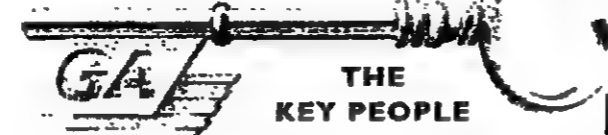
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Robert Miller on two investment stars and the Japanese factor

The cult of turning fund managers into investment stars and promoting trusts on the back of that fame is an interesting, if sometimes flawed, concept. Flawed because, for all we know, the manager might just have got lucky and been in the right market at the right time.

This weekend, however, investors have a choice between two fund managers who have every right to call attention to their investment skills. In one corner is Ed Merner, late of Schroders and now with Atlantis which today publishes the prospectus for its new Guernsey-based Japan Growth Fund. In the other, is Michael Hart, manager of Foreign & Colonial trust since 1969, Britain's oldest and second largest investment trust, which on Thursday announced its 25th consecutive annual dividend increase.

In securing the services of Mr Merner, Atlantis has scored a notable coup with which to promote its new offshore fund. He has more than 25 years experience of the Japanese securities market and the Schroder Japanese Smaller Companies Fund, which he managed, is the top performing unit trust over ten years. Mr Merner, a fluent Japanese speaker, will continue to live on the spot in Tokyo.

The investment brief for the new Atlantis Japanese fund should suit Mr Merner down to the ground. As the prospectus says he can build his portfolio "without specific restraints on sector weightings or size of company and with an emphasis where the investment adviser (Mr Merner) perceives there to be future growth prospects and above average management".

Atlantis Japan, which hopes to raise \$150 million, has made an application for a listing on the London Stock Exchange and subsequently hopes to qualify as an approved investment trust. The fund's minimum entry point is £1,500 and investors will receive the by-now-traditional one free warrant with every five shares.

But Atlantis Investment Management is a mere babe when stacked against the giant F&C and in the highly cut-throat investment world (see Trustwatch below) it has to make a mark with investors in a short space of time. Atlantis was only founded in 1994 by Peter Irving, a former assistant director at Schroder Investment Management, where he was in charge of Korean investments. Japan also features in F&C's geographically diversified portfolio together with Europe, the US, Latin America, other Far East markets and the UK.

If you are looking for a specific exposure to Japan then the Atlantis Japan Growth fund should at least make the shortlist. If, however, you want a sound and consistent general investment trust, where the manager makes all the decisions for you, then F&C has to be a very strong contender. A final point is that both F&C and Atlantis Japan are non-qualifying trusts in personal equity plan terms and only £1,500 can be ring-fenced in them. F&C does, however, offer you a chance to make up the difference to £6,000 in other F&C trusts.

Reputations at stake in battle of heavyweights



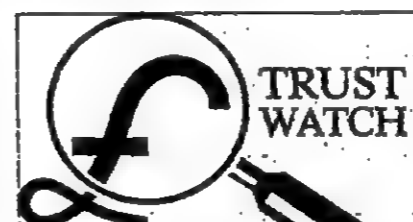
Push and shove: skills are under scrutiny as two new funds fight it out for investors' cash

Analysts welcome TR's hostile bid

THE hostile bid launched this week by TR Pacific Investment Trust on Thornton's Asian Emerging Markets Investment Trust is not so much ruthless as just plain no-nonsense (writes Robert Miller).

TR Pacific, managed by Michael Watt, is a top performer in its sector and its shares trade at a premium to the net asset value of the underlying portfolio. Thornton Asian languishes at the other end of the performance scales and its shares trade at a discount.

The TR Pacific bid offers Thornton Asian shareholders new TR Pacific Ordinary shares or a cash alternative to those investors who want an exit route. If the TR bid is successful, it will cut the annual management fee to 0.9 per cent. To overcome the problem posed by



Thornton Asian's holdings in unlisted Chinese investments, TR proposes to strip these out and issue "C" or Conversion shares in respect of them.

Iain Dale, chairman of TR Pacific, says: "Our offer provides Thornton Asian shareholders with an attractive opportunity to exchange their Thornton Asian shares for securities which enjoy a better

market rating, and in the board's opinion, offer better prospects for the future, while providing an immediate solution to the problem of Chinavest." Thornton Asian, which is due to be woundup this autumn, had already called an extraordinary general meeting to consider its future possibly involving a restructuring as an open-ended fund. In light of the TR bid, Thornton Asian's board advised investors to take no immediate action. Investment trust analysts welcomed TR's move. Hamish Buchanan of NatWest Securities said the bid "made a lot of sense". Peter Walls of Credit Lyonnais Laing said: "This is construction or corrective corporate activity and we welcome it."

Additional research by Jill Forbes

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*Source Micropal, offer to bid, gross income reinvested to 13.96. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. The value of units and income from them may go down as well as up and an investor may not get back the amount invested. Fidelity only provides information about its products and will not give investment advice based on individual circumstances. Tax assumptions may be subject to future statutory change and the value of tax savings and eligibility to invest in a PEP will depend on individual circumstances. The MoneyBuilder PEP Range consists of the MoneyBuilder Index PEP, MoneyBuilder Income PEP and Fidelity MoneyBuilder PEP. Fidelity PEPs are offered by Fidelity Investments Limited, regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority. All yields are estimated and not guaranteed. †Estimated gross income calculated on 12.3.96. Redemption yield is 7.6%. ††For single plans taken out in 1995/96 only.

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Take cover when you visit the hotspots

The right route for US car insurance

A black and white portrait of a man with dark hair, wearing a light-colored dress shirt and a dark tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The image is framed by a thick black border.

France: car crash

Mr France has hired lawyers in both the UK and in the US to help him fight his action, in which he could end up being liable for \$1million. His solicitors are hoping to team up with the motorcyclist's solicitors to bring a case against Thomas Cook. Bob Clark, commercial insurance

products manager, points out that all travel insurance policies exclude car accidents under their public liability cover. Mr Clark adds: "The minimum amount of liability insurance people are obliged to take out in America varies from state to state. For example, in Florida it is \$20,000. This minimum compensation is very low in a country where the maximum awards are very high."

He advises anyone planning to hire a car in the US to take out the liability insurance supplement. For example, US insurer AIG has a policy Topsyure, which will provide extra cover of up to \$1m. Mr Clark says: "The extra cover costs around £5 a day."

BEST BUY GUIDE

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Direct Travel	Club Direct Class-	Folgate	Direct Travel
\$14	\$35	\$42	\$72.80
Help the Aged	Life Insurance	\$43 Direct	World Cover Dir
\$14.87	\$5.40	\$46.13	\$75
Country	Inter Assurance	Help the Aged	\$4 Direct
\$15.15	\$35.50	\$44.90	\$75.85
FAMILY COVER			
Inter Assurance	Direct Travel	Inter Assurance	Inter Assurance
\$24.50	\$81.25	\$34	\$93
Direct Travel	Inter Assurance	\$43 Direct	Direct Travel
\$24.50	\$87.50	\$87.13	\$101.44
Whitely	Club Direct Class-	Sea Alliance	Direct Travel
\$24.50	\$87.50	\$90	Plus \$117.88
Life Insurance	Travel Insurance	Help the Aged	Workcover Dir
\$24.50	Direct \$83	\$70.40	\$120
Travel Insurance			
Direct \$39.40			
RETIRED OR ELDERLY			
Whitely (85+)			
\$16.80	Club Direct Class-	Help the Aged	Help the Aged
\$17.00	(70-74) \$34.50	\$42.80	\$59.70
Direct \$16.90	\$35.00	\$43.00 up to 79	\$59.80 & ..
Help the Aged	\$37.41	\$44	\$59.90+1055
\$16.90	Travel Insurance	\$59.80+1055	Direct Travel
Age Concern	Life Insurance	Direct \$81	\$59.70 \$117.80
\$16.85	Age Concern	Sea Alliance	Class (70+)
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Source: 10 March 2004

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The wide-open grandeur of the Nevada Desert — but make sure you have adequate insurance before you travel

Dollar exchange rate that cost the price of three US air tickets

Cash is still king around much of the world. The mighty greenback remains the favourite method of payment from the street bazaars of Cairo to the chic shops of Hong Kong.

Yet if you are returning to Britain from abroad with a large sum in dollars it is a very different story. My father is an American resident. I see him infrequently and on my last visit he gave me \$15,000 in crisp \$100 bills to cover Christmas and birthday presents over the coming year for his seven English grandchildren and their parents.

It seemed sensible to keep commission and bank charges to a minimum by exchanging the sum in one transaction and then distributing the money around the family in sterling.

I consulted my account manager at the National Westminster bank in Orpington, Kent, where I have banked for more than 20 years. I was told that the bank's maximum commission was £15, no matter how large the sum. My best course, I was advised, was simply to pay the cash direct into my NatWest account.

When the NatWest was asked to turn \$15,000 into sterling there was a considerable sting in the tail

I did so and thought no more of it until two months later when I received the regular quarterly bank statement. The sum credited was just above £9,200. A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation suggested that at about 1.52 dollars to the pound, the sum should have been nearer £9,900.

The bank denied that there had been any mistake. Yes, the commission was only £15. But, they now explained belatedly, they offer a different exchange rate for cash deposits in foreign currency to cover their "handling charges".

And it is some difference. To handle my 150 crisp new bills the bank had offered just 1.63 dollars to the pound. Although I had been acting on the NatWest's own advice on how to minimise charges on the transaction, the bank had ended up taking more than £650 out of

the children's gifts from their grandfather. At no point had NatWest told me that there was a different — and highly disadvantageous — rate for cash exchanges.

I pointed out that I could have handled the transaction cheaper myself by flying back to America and asking my father for a cheque. Eventually NatWest offered a refund of £300 as a "gesture of goodwill". Even so, I had still paid more than £390 for their services.

NatWest said: "Unfortunately Mr Williamson left the branch without knowing the rate of exchange and had incorrectly assumed that he would get the commercial exchange rate and not the cash rate. We have offered him an ex-gratia payment."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



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PENSIONS GUIDE

PART

4

Helen Pridham on why it is vital to find out what contribution your employer is making to your future

Since 1983, employers have not been allowed to make it compulsory for employees to join an occupational pension scheme. But if you are offered the chance of joining a company scheme it is rarely advisable to refuse.

The biggest advantage of belonging to a scheme is that your employer will be making a contribution to your future pension on top of any savings you make. Indeed, with some occupational schemes, the employer pays the full cost. According to the National Association of Pension Funds's 1995 Annual Survey, employees last year were expected to contribute an average of 4.6 per cent of their earnings to their schemes, while employers paid in 7.1 per cent. In schemes where employees were not expected to contribute, employers stumped up an average of 10.1 per cent.

With most schemes, though, employers' contributions vary from year to year because they pay whatever is necessary to meet the on-going cost of the scheme. There are often other benefits associated with pension scheme membership,

such as life assurance.

Currently half of all company employees belong to an occupational pension scheme. The two main types of occupational pension schemes are:

Final salary schemes: These traditional schemes, which still make up the majority of those currently in existence, promise a fixed amount of pension in relation to your final salary at retirement for each year you work for an employer. A frequent build-up is 1/60th of final salary for each year of membership of the scheme. The maximum permitted pension is two-thirds of final salary, but since it normally requires 40 years continuous service with one employer to achieve this maximum, very few people ever reach this level.

These schemes are attractive for employees because of the certainty they provide. They are especially advantageous for those with long service, whose earnings increase towards retirement. Employers are growing less keen on them, though, because of the open-ended financial commitment they require and increased regulation.



Beware: It may be, as the BBC series implied, a Nice Day at the Office — but is the pension scheme good enough?

ment they require and increased regulation.

Money purchase schemes: In recent years an increasing number of employers have introduced these schemes which require fixed contributions from both employers and employees.

The amount of pension you get from this type of scheme is not guaranteed. It will depend on the level of contributions, the investment performance achieved by the fund's managers and annuity rates at the time of your retirement. While these schemes lack the certainty of the final salary, they tend

to be fairer to those who move jobs.

Until relatively recently, employers were often not very good at communicating the merits of their pension schemes to employees, particularly the fact that they were paying into the schemes on behalf of their employees or the continuing benefits of an occupational pension in retirement. This is undoubtedly the reason why some people in the late Eighties were lured out of superior company schemes into personal pension schemes which are now the subject of a large-scale regulatory review.

Nowadays the marketing rules for personal pension salesmen are much stricter but there are still some people who are opting not to join occupational schemes. "They tend to be either young people who misguidedly would rather

have the cash in hand or people who do not expect to stay very long with their employer," says Sheila Fuller, pensions adviser at independent intermediaries, Frizzell Life & Financial Planning.

She adds: "The problem is that the young people will find it very difficult to make up these contributions in years to come, while those who think they are only going to be with an employer for a short time are often still there five years later."

Fortunately, however, even if you have declined membership of a scheme in the past, most employers will still allow you into a scheme for future service.

Many people were put off occupational pensions by the Maxwell affair. However the 1995 Pensions Act which

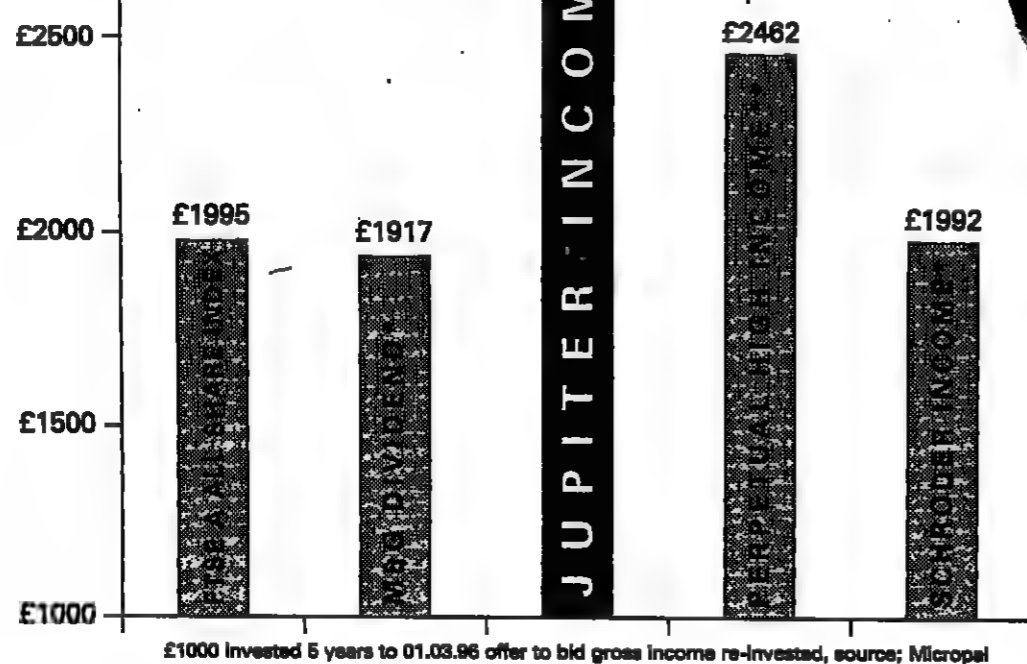
comes into effect in April 1997 will introduce a variety of measures designed to improve considerably the financial security of pension scheme members.

Since 1986, people changing jobs have had the legal right to transfer their pension rights out of their old employer's pension scheme to their next employer's scheme or to their own individual pension plan. This can be advantageous but it is vital to get professional advice.

Jim Brooks, development manager for Clerical Medical, the insurer, says: "Transfers are not always advantageous especially if your old employer gives generous post-retirement discretionary increases in pensions."

"But for some people a transfer can enhance their pension," he adds.

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* Source: Micropal, UK Equity Income Sector. ** Source: Micropal, UK Equity & Bond Sector. † Source: Micropal, offer to bid gross income reinvested.

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Demand high as Peps are offered at a bargain price

It is now possible to buy a personal equity plan based on unit trusts from a top investment house for as little as £25.

The price war, which has been raging among the Pep product providers over the last three years, has now spread to the independent financial advisers selling the products themselves. Discounting has caught the imagination of the public, and unit trust companies are reporting a big surge in business as the end of the tax year looms.

When unit trust Peps were first introduced a few years ago, it would have been unthinkable that charges would fall to this level. Then, investors had to pay for the Pep wrapping, as well as a 5 to 6 per cent initial charge. It is now cheaper to invest through a Pep, than it is to buy the underlying investments.

The discounts offered are usually in the region of 3 per cent — this is the equivalent to the amount of initial commission the independent financial adviser would have earned on the deal. On a Pep investment of £6,000, this represents a saving of £180.

The adviser will then hope to make money on renewal commission, usually 0.5 per cent. The renewal commission comes out of the annual management charge on the Pep, which is usually in the order of 1.5 per cent.

However, over the last few weeks, price competition has intensified to the extent that some of the deals offered by the discount houses are effectively "loss leaders".

One particular broker, the Pep Shop, based in Nottingham, is offering a 4 per cent discount on some products. The broker itself pays the extra 1 per cent, which it hopes to recoup from two years' worth of renewal commission.

The Pep Shop gives those who take up its services generic advice about which type of Pep to take out. Haydn Green, Pep Shop managing director, said: "We find out whether, for

instance, the investor needs to invest for growth or for income." He said investors would then be advised about the types of products which would be suitable. Mr Green said "Most of our clients are in the over-45 age group. These people may be building society refugees, or those moving capital out of fixed interest stock, directly into equities." Mr Green believes discount houses will grow in number, and could end up representing around 50 per cent of all Pep business transacted.

The Pep Shop will give a 4 per cent discount on Perpetual Peps, a 4.5 per cent discount on Jupiter Peps and a 0.75 per cent discount on Fidelity's corporate bond Pep.

Next year it is planning to offer "welcome payments" for people transferring their Peps from other brokers.

Chelsea Financial Services is one of the biggest and longest established discount houses in the country. It claims that investors are taking out Peps with it at a rate of 1,000 a week. John Holder, Chelsea managing director, says it started the discount battle more than ten years ago. Chelsea, for instance, will offer a discount of up to 5 per cent on Perpetual's Peps. The discount will comprise of 3 per cent rebated commission plus another 2 per cent from Perpetual itself.

Pep-Direct is the latest entrant into the market. It offers an execution-by-telephone service, which costs a flat fee of £25 per Pep. The company, which is part of independent financial adviser Torquil Clark, was launched on February 17. It has already sold around 1,400 Peps.

□ **Pep discount houses include** Chelsea on 0171 351 6022, Garrison on 01482 861455, Seymour Sinclair on 0171 935 6445, Pep Shop on 0115 982 5105, Pep-Direct on 0800 413186.

CAROLINE MERRELL



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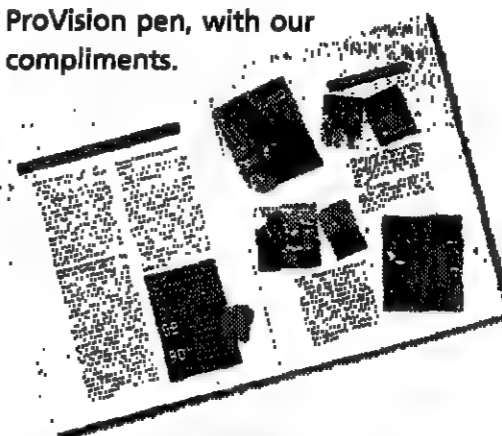
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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Caroline Merrell looks at the options and notes some of the criticisms of Peps that return your capital

Guarantees available — but at what price?

The word guarantee has a peculiar allure for the public. For those unused to the ups and downs of the stock market, a guarantee can provide the extra reassurance they need to encourage them to switch money from their building society account.

Many fund management groups are now offering personal equity plans (PEPs) which will guarantee to return your capital if they are held for a specified period, usually five or six years. The guarantee does not hold if the product is cashed in earlier.

Investors should be aware that these guarantees come at a price. You may be sacrificing some of the gains you could make on the stock market for the security.

For example, Sun Alliance is launching a lump-sum Pep which gives investors the option of taking out an insurance policy outside the

Pep. Those who take out the policy will be guaranteed to get back their capital plus the premium they paid for their insurance policy. There is also the potential of some capital growth on the Pep itself.

The premium costs 5 per cent of the investment — £300 on a maximum investment of £6,000. The rest of the money will be invested in corporate bonds which will aim to pay a high tax-free income. The Pep is currently yielding about 7 per cent, although this level of income is not guaranteed.

Sun Alliance expects to take at least £100m in to the Pep. It is extending the offer on the plan until the end of April to allow investors the opportunity of investing both this year's and next year's Pep allowance in to the plan. Keith Luckhoo, marketing services manager, said: "You are sacrificing the interest you would have earned investing the insurance premi-



um in a building society account, in return for capital protection." He points out that the interest earned today on a building society account would be around the 4 per cent mark. "In effect you are paying £12 a year for the capital protection." He adds:

"This product will give peace of mind to the huge number of building society investors who do not want to expose their capital."

The Pep, though, has drawn fire from John Spiers, Best Investment managing director. He has criticised

the yield figure. "It does not take into account the amount you invest in the insurance premium." He also points out that the yield is not guaranteed at the 7 per cent level. Mr Luckhoo said: "We think the income will not fluctuate much from this."

All the other guaranteed Peps on offer rely on derivative instruments, called options, which are purchased using a proportion of the investment, usually about 3 to 5 per cent. The options are used to guarantee the return of capital, or the income level, over a certain period of time. Those companies offering Peps with some sort of guarantee include GAN, Edinburgh Fund Managers, Legal & General and General Accident.

GAN's guaranteed Pep, for instance, can provide a maximum income of 8 per cent a year tax free. If the Pep is held until the end of the six-year term, the original investment will be returned.

Investors are guaranteed an income of at least 4 per cent; the other 4 per cent is dependent on whether the FT-SE 100 index rises over the discrete one-year period starting from March 8. The GAN Pep is one of the few to offer some sort of guarantee on the income.

However, some advisers are sceptical about this guarantee.

Ian Millward, an adviser with Chase de Vere, a Pep specialist, said: "The market could easily rise one year and fall the next, bringing the yield down to 6 per cent, with no possibility of capital growth."

Sultan Jetha, development director and group secretary at Sun Alliance, said: "This Pep is aimed very much at security-conscious investors who demand capital protection."

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Maximum investment £1,000. Redemption yield on 31.12.95 was 7.45%. Tax benefits for PEPs can change, the value of these benefits depends on your circumstances. Please remember that unlike a building society where your capital is guaranteed, the value of PEP investments and the income from them may go down as well as up, particularly in the short term and that past performance is no guide to the future. A member of ALITE. Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and DMO. Clerical Medical Unit Trust Managers Limited is a part of the Clerical Medical Investment Group which comprises Clerical Medical and General Life Assurance Society and its subsidiary companies.

Overwhelmed by demand

The Bristol & West Building Society has suspended processing of applications for Direct Access instant access, 90-day notice postal and high-interest cheque accounts after being overwhelmed by applications.

Earlier this month, the West Bromwich Building Society suspended applications for its Direct Instant telephone and postal instant access account. Neither society can guarantee that when they resume sending forms, users of the forms will get the rate currently being offered.

Savers seeking a good variable rate with easy access targeted the societies, consistently top of best-buy tables. The West Bromwich was paying 6 per cent gross on a minimum investment of £2,000 in its instant access

account, and 6.75 per cent on £100,000 or more. The Bristol & West halved its minimum instant access balance to £5,000, on which it was paying 5.35 per cent gross, rising to 5.85 per cent on £100,000.

Bristol & West. Those who have received an application form should fill it in and return it, and interest at the current best-buy variable rate will be backdated to when cheques are received if processing is delayed.

Savers who have not yet received application forms will not do so until the suspension ends. West Bromwich. Forms already sent out or back will be processed and the current rate honoured, backdated to when the investment is received.

SARA MCCONNELL

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Is this the 'best' so far in the sorry tale of friendly society policy maturity value?

From Mr B.E. Danton
Sir, Further to the correspondence from Mr Brabbin and Mr Bryant concerning the maturity value of friendly society policies, (Weekend Money Letters, Why we need to champion the small investor against friendly societies, March 2, and Friendly rivalry in maturity, March 16) I think I can claim the "best" so far.

I have just received notification from Family Assurance that my ten-year policy is due to mature this April.

For an annual payment of £105.84, I quote: "the current value of your policy is £1,312.76. This is not the tenth anniversary value as your policy value will continue to fluctuate in line with market conditions and may fall as well as rise".

Among the options offered in their letter is the opportunity to continue making contributions to the policy, or leave the policy to invest with no further contributions.

I have written to Family

Assurance asking for details of the gross rate of interest paid on this policy over the past ten years as they make much of the fact that it is a tax-free plan.

Until I receive that crucial piece of information I shall be unable to make an informed decision as to where I shall place the profits from their endeavours on my behalf over the past ten years.

I am ashamed to admit, to my dismay, that I have a second policy with the company due to mature in October 2000.

I am open to any advice as to whether I should ditch the policy now (I expect it would be virtually worthless to cash it in) and put the payments to more fruitful purposes, or continue with the policy and make the best of a poor investment.

Let future investors beware. Yours faithfully, B.E. DANTON, 20 Mere Close, Newport, Shropshire.

Waiting, and waiting, for Tessa
"In delay there lies no plenty
I qualified, when sweet
and twenty" (signed: Shakespeare)



From Ms P. Reynolds
Sir, A Tessa delay exceeded with ease.

Despite all my efforts, my Halifax Maturity Certificate took 58 days to reach me —

from January 16 to March 14!
Yours faithfully,
PAMELA REYNOLDS,
64 Sussex Court,
Eaton Road, Hove,
East Sussex.

Tax advantage with Peps

From Mr P. Regan
Sir, Well done Mr Craighead. (Charges may take much of the interest out of Peps, Weekend Money Letters, March 16).

Charges are critical when assessing personal equity plans.

For most investors capital gains tax exemption is irrelevant and freedom from income taxation offers a small advantage which is easily lost in charges.

Competition is forcing down charges and more transparent disclosure is coming.

But let the buyer beware. The tax advantage is yours. Don't give it away.

Yours sincerely,
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In praise of mutuality

From Mr R.S. Payne
Sir, I have just read your leading article in *The Times* (Jack of all trades or master of one?), Weekend Money, March 16) and I agree with everything you say about building societies.

Even in today's financial climate there must be a role to play for traditional societies not interested in diversification or conversion to PLC status.

Yours faithfully,
R.S. PAYNE,
20 Moffat Road,
Christchurch,
Dorset.

Lenders seek talks with Union Finance clients

Lenders are urging borrowers who tried to free themselves from negative equity by taking advice from Union Finance to make contact and negotiate a settlement. They promise they will be sympathetic to borrowers who talk to them and warn those who fail to come forward that they can expect to face court action to recover debts.

Union Finance, the controversial debt counselling service, went into liquidation at the beginning of the month, leaving thousands of borrowers tens of thousands of pounds in debt.

Many have contacted *The Times*, saying they have no means of repaying the money. But they are afraid to contact their lenders in case they are pursued for huge debts through the courts. Many are also angry that their lenders proved unhelpful when told of negative equity problems in the beginning. This pushed them into the arms of Union Finance, they say.

The affairs of the collapsed firm are in the hands of the official receiver, which is handing them over to A. W.

Sara McConnell finds the societies more sympathetic to the victims of the company

Mudd, an insolvency practitioner in Billericay. But unravelling Union Finance's affairs could take months, while borrowers' debts continue to mount. Lenders say people should not delay contacting them until they hear from A. W. Mudd.

Union Finance told borrowers that they could free themselves from negative equity by handing in their keys and claiming on the mortgage indemnity insurance taken out to cover the loan. The insurance pays out to the lender if it has to repossess and sell the property at a shortfall.

But Union Finance claimed the insurance covered the borrower rather than the lender and that borrowers could not be pursued for any shortfall. Lenders say this is wrong

and they can and will pursue defaulters for up to 12 years. Several court cases have confirmed the lenders' view that the mortgage indemnity insurance is for their benefit.

Borrowers who have handed in their keys and forced lenders to sell at a loss are still liable for the difference, which continues to accrue interest until repaid. Legal fees and other costs are also added.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) said: "Of course we want people to talk to us and see if an arrangement can be made to repay some or all of the shortfall. Surely it's better to try and reach a deal rather than waiting for a possibly enormous demand".

Individual lenders agreed. The Halifax, Woolwich and Alliance & Leicester, all of which have borrowers who contacted *The Times*, urged people to come forward. The Woolwich said: "We take a pragmatic approach. We want to recover the debt but if they haven't got the means we will reach a sensible settlement." But it gave warning: "If we can't find people we will use a tracing agent."

Debt-counselling company in liquidation

The official receiver in Scotland has this week written to clients of Union Finance, the controversial debt counselling company, telling them that the firm has gone into liquidation.



The receiver has been besieged with calls from anxious Union Finance clients who had tried and failed to get through to the firm's offices in Scotland. The Times has received similar calls. Borrowers who contacted *The Times* say they had debts of tens of thousands of pounds after following Union Finance's advice, which they say they have no hope of paying. The Official Receiver in Scotland has written to borrowers asking them to contact him.

How Weekend Money broke the news of the liquidation of Union Finance last week

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هكذا من الأصل

Shares end the week quietly

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964	1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940	1939	1938	1937	1936	1935	1934	1933	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927	1926	1925	1924	1923	1922	1921	1920	1919	1918	1917	1916	1915	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910	1909	1908	1907	1906	1905	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898	1897	1896	1895	1894	1893	1892	1891	1890	1889	1888	1887	1886	1885	1884	1883	1882	1881	1880	1879	1878	1877	1876	1875	1874	1873	1872	1871	1870	1869	1868	1867	1866	1865	1864	1863	1862	1861	1860	1859	1858	1857	1856	1855	1854	1853	1852	1851	1850	1849	1848	1847	1846	1845	1844	1843	1842	1841	1840	1839	1838	1837	1836	1835	1834	1833	1832	1831	1830	1829	1828	1827	1826	1825	1824	1823	1822	1821	1820	1819	1818	1817	1816	1815	1814	1813	1812	1811	1810	1809	1808	1807	1806	1805	1804	1803	1802	1801	1800	1799	1798	1797	1796	1795	1794	1793	1792	1791	1790	1789	1788	1787	1786	1785	1784	1783	1782	1781	1780	1779	1778	1777	1776	1775	1774	1773	1772	1771	1770	1769	1768	1767	1766	1765	1764	1763	1762	1761	1760	1759	1758	1757	1756	1755	1754	1753	1752	1751	1750	1749	1748	1747	1746	1745	1744	1743	1742	1741	1740	1739	1738	1737	1736	1735	1734	1733	1732	1731	1730	1729	1728	1727	1726	1725	1724	1723	1722	1721	1720	1719	1718	1717	1716	1715	1714	1713	1712	1711	1710	1709	1708	1707	1706	1705	1704	1703	1702	1701	1700	1699	1698	1697	1696	1695	1694	1693	1692	1691	1690	1689	1688	1687	1686	1685	1684	1683	1682	1681	1680	1679	1678	1677	1676	1675	1674	1673	1672	1671	1670	1669	1668	1667	1666	1665	1664	1663	1662	1661	1660	1659	1658	1657	1656	1655	1654	1653	1652	1651	1650	1649	1648	1647	1646	1645	1644	1643	1642	1641	1640	1639	1638	1637	1636	1635	1634	1633	1632	1631	1630	1629	1628	1627	1626	1625	1624	1623	1622	1621	1620	1619	1618	1617	1616	1615	1614	1613	1612	1611	1610	1609	1608	1607	1606	1605	1604	1603	1602	1601	1600	1599	1598	1597	1596	1595	1594	1593	1592	1591	1590	1589	1588	1587	1586	1585	1584	1583	1582	1581	1580	1579	1578	1577	1576	1575	1574	1573	1572	1571	1570	1569	1568	1567	1566	1565	1564	1563	1562	1561	1560	1559	1558	1557	1556	1555	1554	1553	1552	1551	1550	1549	1548	1547	1546	1545	1544	1543	1542	1541	1540	1539	1538	1537	1536	1535	1534	1533	1532	1531	1530	1529	1528	1527	1526	1525	1524	1523	1522	1521	1520	1519	1518	1517	1516	1515	1514	1513	1512	1511	1510	1509	1508	1507	1506	1505	1504	1503	1502	1501	1500	1499	1498	1497	1496	1495	1494	1493	1492	1491	1490	1489	1488	1487	1486	1485	1484	1483	1482	1481	1480	1479	1478	1477	1476	1475	1474	1473	1472	1471	1470	1469	1468	1467	1466	1465	1464	1463	1462	1461	1460	1459	1458	1457	1456	1455	1454	1453	1452	1451	1450	1449	1448	1447	1446	1445	1444	1443	1442	1441	1440	1439	1438	1437	1436	1435	1434	1433	1432	1431	1430	1429	1428	1427	1426	1425	1424	1423	1422	1421	1420	1419	1418	1417	1416	1415	1414	1413	1412	1411	1410	1409	1408	1407	1406	1405	1404	1403	1402	1401	1400	1399	1398	1397	1396	1395	1394	1393	1392	1391	1390	1389	1388	1387	1386	1385	1384	1383	1382	1381	1380	1379	1378	1377	1376	1375	1374	1373	1372	1371	1370	1369	1368	1367	1366	1365	1364	1363	1362	1361	1360	1359	1358	1357	1356	1355	1354	1353	1352	1351	1350	1349	1348	1347	1346	1345	1344	1343	1342	1341	1340	1339	1338	1337	1336	1335	1334	1333	1332	1331	1330	1329	1328	1327	1326	1325	1324	1323	1322	1321	1320	1319	1318	1317	1316	1315	1314	1313	1312	1311	1310	1309	1308	1307	1306	1305	1304	1303	1302	1301	1300	1299	1298	1297	1296	1295	1294	1293	1292	1291	1290	1289	1288	1287	1286	1285	1284	1283	1282	1281	1280	1279	1278	1277	1276	1275	1274	1273	1272	1271	1270	1269	1268	1267	1266	1265	1264	1263	1262	1261	1260	1259	1258	1257	1256	1255	1254	1253	1252	1251	1250	1249	1248	1247	1246	1245	1244	1243	1242	1241	1240	1239	1238	1237	1236	1235	1234	1233	1232	1231	1230	1229	1228	1227	1226	1225	1224	1223	1222	1221	1220	1219	1218	1217	1216	1215	1214	1213	1212	1211	1210	1209	1208	1207	1206	1205	1204	1203	1202	1201	1200	1199	1198	1197	1196	1195	1194	1193	1192	1191	1190	1189	1188	1187	1186	1185	1184	1183	1182	1181	1180	1179	1178	1177	1176	1175	1174	1173	1172	1171	1170	1169	1168	1167	1166	1165	1164	1163	1162	1161	1160	1159	1158	1157	1156	1155	1154	1153	1152	1151	1150	1149	1148	1147	1146	1145	1144	1143	1142	1141	1140	1139	1138	1137	1136	1135	1134	1133	1132	1131	1130	1129	1128	1127	1126	1125	1124	1123	1122	1121	1120	1119	1118	1117	1116	1115	1114	1113	1112	1111	1110	1109	1108	1107	1106	1105	1104	1103	1102	1101	1100	1099	1098	1097	1096	1095	1094	1093	1092	1091	1090	1089	1088	1087	1086	1085	1084	1083	1082	1081	1080	1079	1078	1077	1076	1075	1074	1073	1072	1071	1070	1069	1068	1067	1066	1065	1064	1063	1062	1061	1060	1059	1058	1057	1056	1055	1054	1053	1052	1051	1050	1049	1048	1047	1046	1045	1044	1043	1042	1041	1040	1039	1038	1037	1036	1035	1034	1033	1032	1031	1030	1029	1028	1027	1026	1025	1024	1023	1022	1021	1020	1019	1018	1017	1016	1015	1014	1013	1012	1011	1010	1009	1008	1007	1006	1005	1004	1003	1002	1001	1000	999	998	997	996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Saturday portrait: Gary McAllister, by Kevin McCarra

Smooth operator who brings refinement to club and country

Going home is an exercise in time travel. When Gary McAllister, the captain of Leeds United and his country, returns to Scotland for an international match, the boyhood friends who ring up for tickets often refer to him as "wee man". The term harks back to his early years, before full-time training stretched his frame.

The story of McAllister, who will direct Leeds's performance in the Coca-Cola Cup final against Aston Villa tomorrow, has been all about growth. "Gary will retire satisfied," Gordon Strachan, his predecessor as captain at Elland Road, said, "because he'll know he has got as much out of himself as he possibly could. He's never been happy to stay just as he is."

That striving is concealed by McAllister's style. Despite possessing the modern virtues of stamina and diligence, which can see him hurry an opponent into error, McAllister still looks like a throw-back to an era when the game prized elegance. Head up and straight-backed, he may lift a precise long ball or clip the through-pass an instant before the gap in a defence closes.

His talent, though, initially went unperceived and there were no scouts badgering for his signature as a boy. The Scotland youth caps went to others, who would mostly fail in football, while McAllister came closer to international recognition, in those years, as a golfer. All the same, there was some smoothness in the process that took a Lanarkshire lad into the books of the local club, Motherwell.

There, McAllister's height grew before his strength did and it sounds as if he was one of those teenagers permanently in need of a wall to lean on. Soon enough, however, he was helping to prop up Motherwell, for there are always fine job prospects at a struggling club. Others could see that he did not belong in the midst of such toil.

His manager at Motherwell, Tommy McLean, flinches at the very idea of praise, yet McAllister drew from him, in 1985, a eulogy that made comparisons, in potential, with Graeme Souness. The

parallels seem shaky now, particularly since the Leeds captain has never shown the calibrated aggression of the Liverpool man, but some elements of the analogy still stand.

Like Souness, there is a self-sufficiency about McAllister. "He likes to be one of the boys, and yet he's not one of the boys," Craig Brown, the Scotland manager, said of his captain. Perhaps it is the slight distance from the rest of the group that makes others follow him. He led his country for the first time in 1993, with Brown's faith in him so emphatic that a celebrated home-based player, Paul McStay, of Celtic, had the job taken from him.

Independence and its responsibilities were inherited early by McAllister. His mother died when he was eight and, with his father at

led McAllister to miscalculate his own value. When the moment came, in 1990, to leave Leicester, it was thought that he would sign for Nottingham Forest and the player himself was party to the presumption. A deal was in place, until the meeting that was supposed to clinch it.

The audience with Brian Clough, then the Forest manager, seemed to peeve both men. In his own account, McAllister says he was given a lengthy inventory of his failings as a player, although these were graciously to be overlooked, since he could at least pass the ball. Whether this was candour or an attempt to establish dominance, it only antagonised the Scot.

McAllister was then troubled by Clough's behaviour when the manager began to harangue a waiter who was making too much noise in gathering some spoons onto a tray. The following day, the transfer to the City Ground was declined. In this case, one can only conclude, player had interviewed manager and rejected his application.

Six years ago, it was unusual for footballers to exercise power, and probably unprecedented for a man, at 25, to reject the invitation finally to join a leading club. It is such self-possession that leads Brown to view McAllister as a young executive: "You can imagine him having a mobile phone with him on the pitch."

In 1990, he answered Howard Wilkinson's call, agreeing to move to Elland Road in a £1 million deal. There, at least, an accord with the manager was easily reached and two years later, Leeds won the old first division title, edging past Manchester United in the final days of the season. The principal strength of the team lay in midfield, where McAllister worked with Strachan, David Batty and the then-precocious Gary Speed.

For McAllister, at least, progress at Elland Road has been fairly steady, and he went on to take over the captaincy from Strachan. It is not a titular position. "There is more involved in that job at Leeds than at other clubs," Strachan said. "Howard allows you a little closer to him



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE MARTIN

'You can imagine him having a mobile phone with him when he is on the pitch'

work, taking care of the house and looking after his younger brother, Craig, became routine duties. The habit of coping was established and a move to Leicester City in 1985, for £150,000, carried no risk of homesickness. McAllister, at 20, was ready to pursue his trade and the surroundings were incidental.

Elland Road, however, proved a fortunate destination, particularly once David Pleat became manager there and improved McAllister's understanding of the where and when of midfield play. Footballers are famous for fending off advice, but he is greedy for knowledge.

"Gary is even better now than he was when Leeds won the title in 1992," Strachan said, "because he has the capacity to keep on taking in more information about the game. He'll jump at any opportunity to learn and we even used to go and watch the youth matches together."

Nonetheless, humility has never

and you act as a go-between. Whether you're relaying some problem a player has or organising a rota for hospital visits, it's a full-time job."

McAllister appears at ease with his many roles. The thinning hair and those features marked by thoughtfulness only add to the impression of maturity. On occasions when events slip beyond his control, the effect is, in his case, particularly outlandish. His chagrin at breaking an arm on the eve

of his marriage to Denise, in 1993 and sporting a plaster cast at the wedding was considerable.

Little else has gone wrong for McAllister. The gradual development of his career brought him to prominence a little too late to permit the move to Italian football he would love to have made. His measured progress in football, however, seems to imply longevity and his contract with Leeds lasts until 1999. The club is thought to have brushed aside inquiries for

him from Rangers and, this season, Arsenal.

The content of his future at Elland Road, however, is particularly hard to discern. Since the title was won in 1992, English football has changed, but Leeds have not. Or, at least, not sufficiently. Before the FA Cup quarter-final replay against Liverpool at Anfield on Wednesday, Wilkinson said he did not want to see his side congratulated for attractive play in a defeat. Leeds lost 3-0 anyway, and

received no praise at all. The problem with their utilitarian style is that it is not utilitarian at all. It does not work these days. If the club, no matter the result tomorrow, is to evolve, however, McAllister's refined presence will be crucial. On meeting him in 1990, Clough looked at the player's cowboy boots and asked if he was related to John Wayne. Well, there is no holster and no drawl, but McAllister, too, can champion a cause.

THE TIMES MATCH-BY-MATCH GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL v NEWCASTLE

Undisputed scenes at Highbury the last time these teams met, in the Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final in January, when Arsenal's Roy Keane and Terry McDermott indulged in handbags at ten paces after Keane had been sent off. Roy Keane, who will be a good boy today, when the Premiership leaders return, and it is hoped that the players keep their heads, too, with so much at stake, Arsenal continue their quest for Europe, still without Adams, while Newcastle attempts to put daylight between themselves and Manchester United.

How they line up

ARSENAL (from): D. Seaman, L. Dixon, A. Linighan, M. Keown, S. Marsh, N. Winterburn, P. Merson, D. Platt, D. Bergkamp, J. Hartson, I. Wright, R. Parlor, G. Helder, M. Rowe.

NEWCASTLE (from): P. Sturges, W. Gordon, S. Watson, J. Bensch, S. Howey, P. Abbott, R. Lee, D. Batty, P. Beardsley, D. Givon, L. Ferdinand, P. Appleby, D. Peacock, K. Gillespie, L. Clark, R. Elliot.

BOLTON v SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

Wednesday have just about eased their fears of relegation, with successive wins over Aston Villa and Southampton. Another win this afternoon should secure their Premiership status, although Sheffield Wednesday's goalkeeping is a worry. Bolton, who scored three goals in the last two matches, find his colleagues up front shown such promise throughout the season, perhaps Wanderers would not be in such a predicament. A game best watched on Capital.

LAST SEASON: Chelsea 1-0 QPR.

10-YEAR RECORD: No fixtures.

How they line up

BOLTON (from): A. Davidson, G. Bergerson, J. Phillips, S. Currie, S. Coleman, C. Fairclough, S. Sellers, S. Green, A. Stubbs, N. Blyth, M. Platt, J. Foy, F. de la Haza, J. McGinley, A. Thompson, D. Lee, S. Small.

SHEFF WED (from): C. Woods, S. Nicol, L. Blacoe, J. Newsome, D. Walker, R. Birtles, J. Sheridan, M. Duggan, M. Pentridge, G. Whittingham, D. Hirst, D. Kovacevic, K. Pressman, P. Atherton.

CHELSEA v QUEENS PARK RANGERS

It has got to a sad stage when clubs start a big war over Mark Halsey, 34, the once-England international striker, once Chelsea's top scorer and now Queens Park Rangers' main attraction. Halsey, who scored 10 goals in 1995, is not leaving, even though he and Halsey have not exactly seen eye to eye recently. Another sorry saga as Rangers go down the tubes, the for Tottenham, if they hope to play in Europe next season.

LAST SEASON: Chelsea 1-0 QPR.

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-1, 3-1, 1-1, 1-1, 2-0, 2-1, 1-0, 2-0, 1-0.

How they line up

CHELSEA (from): K. Hinchcock, S. Clarke, M. Duberry, D. Petrescu, T. Phelan, R. Gull, D. West, C. Buxley, D. Lee, J. Spencer, M. Hughes, E. Johnson, G. Peacock, P. Furlong.

QPR (from): J. Sommer, D. Beresford, R. Bennett, A. McDonald, K. Reddy, D. Maddock, S. Barber, G. Goodridge, A. Inyang, T. Sinclair, K. Galtier, M. Halsey, D. Dicks, A. Roberts, S. Ylase, M. Stead, C. Plummet.

EVERTON v WIMBLEDON

Hodgson, of Everton, has returned from a trip to his native Switzerland, where he got married, while Wimbledon, of Wimbledon, is also back in contention after the last exciting diversion of days on the treatment table recovering from an ankle injury. How the Crazy Gang could have done with him in their FA Cup debut by Chelsea, and how they could do with him scoring a few more this season, even if Sam Hammam, his chairman, has not yet produced the Premier he promised. Halsey reached 15 goals. Pay up, Sam.

LAST SEASON: Everton 0-1 Wimbledon 0.

10-YEAR RECORD: 2-0, 2-2, 1-1, 1-1, 2-0, 2-0, 2-0, 2-0, 0-0.

How they line up

EVERTON (from): N. Southall, M. Hodgson, D. Watson, C. Short, A. Hinchcliffe, A. Kinschella, S. Horne, J. Elliott, A. Linighan, G. Stuart, D. Ferguson, D. Arnold, P. Rieout, G. Allen, A. Grant.

WIMBLEDON (from): N. Sullivan, C. Cunningham, A. Kinsale, C. Perry, A. Thum, D. Blackwell, R. Earle, D. Lunn, D. V. Jones, J. Goodman, D. Holdsworth, J. Eust, E. Ely, M. Harford, M. Gayle, S. Castledine.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST v LIVERPOOL

Forest got burnt, badly, in midweek, with Bayern Munich absorbing initial pressure and then bouncing back with five goals. A rather ignominious way to exit from the UEFA Cup quarter-finals, prompting all the usual anguish about the state of English football compared to those brilliant Johnny Foreigners who always win, never lose, and are, to a man, magnificently gifted. What would have been said if Forest had scored an early goal and hung off Liverpool, those brilliant Johnny Foreigners, who the City Ground today.

LAST SEASON: Nottingham Forest 1-1 Liverpool 1.

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-1, 1-1, 2-1, 2-1, 2-2, 2-1, 1-0, 1-0, 1-1.

How they line up

NOTT FM (from): M. Crossley, D. Little, S. Pearce, C. Cooper, S. Christie, C. Best, Williams, S. Stone, D. Phillips, S. Gemmell, B. Roy, K. Campbell, I. Woot, A. Silvert, P. McGregor, C. Allen, S. Howe.

LIVERPOOL (from): D. James, J. McAllister, J. Scuderi, M. Ruddock, M. Wright, R. Jones, D. Matteo, J. Kennedy, S. McManis, J. Barnes, J. Redknapp, M. Thomas, R. Fowler, S. Collymore, I. Rush, A. Warner.

WEST HAM v MANCHESTER CITY

Harry Redknapp, of West Ham, and Alan Ball, of City, like their Johnny Foreigners, too, with Michael Kowalczyk, from west Georgia, likely to be the next imported signing at Motspur Road. Kowalczyk's previous experience of these shores was when he found himself under a boat belonging to Vinny Jones, the Wales and Wimbledon marauder, at the National Stadium in Cardiff last June. Kowalczyk was rather naïveté at being used as a doorman, the referee was not amused, either, and Jones was sent off. Oh, happy days.

LAST SEASON: West Ham 3-1 Manchester City 0.

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-0, 2-0, 1-1, 1-2, 3-1, 3-0.

How they line up

WEST HAM (from): L. Mikosisto, T. Broadbent, J. Dicks, S. Potts, S. Billo, I. Bishop, M. Rieper, M. Hughes, J. Dummett, C. Rowland, I. Dowds, D. Williams, J. Moore, A. Martin, P. Shilton, A. Whitbread, L. Sealey.

MAN CITY (from): E. Krmen, M. Frontczak, S. Lomas, K. Gule, G. Kowalczyk, I. Brightwell, K. Symons, M. Summers, N. Clough, U. Röber, M. Brown, N. Quinn, S. Hely, G. Mazzarelli, A. Kennaghan, M. Margentson.

MANCHESTER UNITED v TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Wot no Cole? Alex Ferguson has finally lost patience with Andy Cole, who cost £7 million when Kevin Keegan signed the Georgia wonder and let him go last season. Ever been had, Alex? Paul Scholes hardly gets a look-in at Old Trafford these days, despite 13 goals, but is likely to send Cole scuttling back on to the substitutes' bench. Must-win scenario for United; they cannot allow Newcastle to get too far ahead again. Must-at-least-not-lose situation for Tottenham, if they hope to play in Europe next season.

LAST SEASON: Manchester United 0-1 Tottenham 0.

10-YEAR RECORD: 0-0, 1-1, 1-0, 1-0, 0-1, 1-1, 4-1, 2-1, 0-0.

How they line up

MAN UTD (from): P. Schmeichel, A. Cole, D. Irwin, P. Neville, G. Neville, D. May, S. Bruce, L. Sharpe, R. Keane, A. Cole, P. Scholes, E. Cantona, D. Beckham, N. Butt, B. McClair.

TOTTENHAM (from): J. Walker, D. Austin, J. Easton, C. Wilson, R. Fox, G. Maltby, A. Simons, E. Sheringham, G. Armstrong, S. Netherwood, R. Rosenzweig, S. Slade, J. Cundy, C. Day, D. Howells.

ASTON VILLA v LEEDS UNITED

Leeds United's efforts at beating Liverpool in the FA Cup quarter-finals must rank as one of the more pathetic attempts in the history of the competition. A cautious approach at Elland Road, followed by a cautious approach at Anfield for the replay, does not exactly add up to the most imaginative game plan. Just what does Howard Wilkinson have up his sleeve for Wembley tomorrow? "OK, I've got it. We're going to beat Villa into submission. It's so simple. It's brilliant. Villa, if they can stay awake, should comfortably take the trophy, with Villa further enhancing his reputation as one of the most complete strikers in the country."

How they line up

ASTON VILLA (probable): M. Bonnici, G. Charles, A. Wright, U. Ehiogu, D. McGrath, G. Southgate, J. Taylor, M. Draper, A. Townsend, S. Milne, D. York, S. Substitutes: To be announced.

LEEDS UTD (probable): J. Lurie, G. Kelly, N. Worthington, A. Donaghy, J. Pemberton, D. Wetherall, L. Radziszewski, C. Palmer, G. McAllister, G. Speed, S. Desno, A. Yeobson, Substitutes: To be announced.

SEMI-FINALS

v Arsenal, First leg (a) 2-2. Second leg (h) 0-0. Agg 2-2. Aston Villa into away goals.

v Birmingham City, First leg (a) 2-1, Second leg (h) 2-0. Leeds into away goals.

FIFTH ROUND

v Wolverhampton (h) 1-0. **v Reading** (h) 2-1.

FOURTH ROUND

v Queens Park Rangers (h) 1-0. **v Blackburn Rovers** (h) 2-1.

THIRD ROUND

v Stockport County (h) 2-0. **v Derby County** (a) 1-0.

SECOND ROUND

v Peterborough United, First leg (h) 0-0, Second leg (a) 1-1. Aston Villa into away goals.

v Notts County, First leg (h) 0-0, Second leg (a) 3-2. Leeds into away goals.

HOW THEY STAND

	P	Pts	Goal diff	Recent form
1 Newcastle	29	54	+29	WLWLW
2 Manchester Utd	31	54	+26	WWWLW
3 Liverpool	30	53	+34	WWWLW
4 Aston Villa	32	56	+16	LWLWL
5 Arsenal	31	51	+14	WDWWL
6 Tottenham	30	51	+10	LWLWL
7 Everton	31	48	+14	WLWDL
8 Blackburn	31	48	+11	LDWLW
9 Chelsea	31	44	+2	LWDDL
10 Nottm Forest	29	44	-1	LLWLW
11 West Ham	31	42	-7	WLWLW
12 Leeds	28	38	-7	WLWDL
13 Middlesbrough	32	35	-13	DLDDL
14 Sheffield Wed	31	35	-7	LLWLW
15 Manchester City	31	30	-21	LDWLW
16 Coventry	30	27	-18	WDDDL
17 Wimbledon	30	27	-19	LDLWL
18 Southampton	28	25	-15	DLDDL
19 QPR	31	23	-22	WDLWL
20 Bolton	31	22	-28	WLWLW

MONDAY

SOUTHAMPTON v COVENTRY

This game is big, seriously big. Had the clubs not been where they are in the Premiership, nobody would have given a monkey's backside the stakes become massive. Southampton's spinning game, in hand here to be used wisely, otherwise they could be south-coast scrapping with Portsmouth next season, while Coventry supporters will be delighted to know that Ron Atkinson has 16,000 in the pot for the target fantasy football league. He's not too far off in reality, either.

LAST SEASON: Southampton 0 Coventry 0.

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-1, 2-0, 1-2, 2-2, 3-0, 2-1, 0-0, 2-2, 1-0, 0-0.

How they line up

SOUTHAMPTON (from): D. Bessant, J. Dodd, R. Hall, K. Monks, A. Nelson, S. Charlton, M. Le Tissier, J. Magilton, M. Maddison, M. Oakley, M. Walters, P. Tadde, D. Hughes, B. Bownes, D. Buxton, V. Jones, R. Shaw, D. Burrows, P. Telfer, P. Ndlovu, P. Williams, E. Jess, J. Salska, D. Dublin, P. Whelan, A. Pickering, N. Lampy, J. Flett.

WHEN TO WATCH ON TELEVISION

Today

10.30pm BBC 1 Match of the Day (Highlights)

Tomorrow

12.00 noon Sky Sports - Goals on Sunday

4.00pm Sky Sports Ford Escort Super Sunday: Manchester United v Tottenham (live)

5.00pm ITV Coca-Cola Cup final: Aston Villa v Leeds United (live)

Monday

7.00pm Sky Sports Ford Escort Super Monday Night Football: Southampton v Coventry (live)

هكذا من الأصل

Yeboah and Yorke can put fizz into Coca-Cola Cup final

Leading men set to sparkle

By ROB HUGHES
FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

THE Coca-Cola Cup might not be the real thing but, so long as nobody tells Tony Yeboah or Dwight Yorke, there is the mouthwatering prospect of some memorable moments when Leeds United meet Aston Villa in the final at Wembley tomorrow.

Yeboah, out of Africa, and Yorke, from the Caribbean, are representatives of the foreign legion, imports who this winter have finally put an end to the nonsense that English football is so fast and so committed that overseas players could never cope with it.

Cope? They lift it, separate it from the norm, transcend the safety-first aspects and the physical aggression of the cul-de-sac down which so many English teams have been led. Yeboah has a hunger, a quite awesome physical and acrobatic approach to goalscoring, that even if this is the only full season we get out of him, we will remember him. Yorke has grown on English minds more slowly, has come to bewitch us

Smooth McAllister 50
Match guide 50
Milosevic's target 51

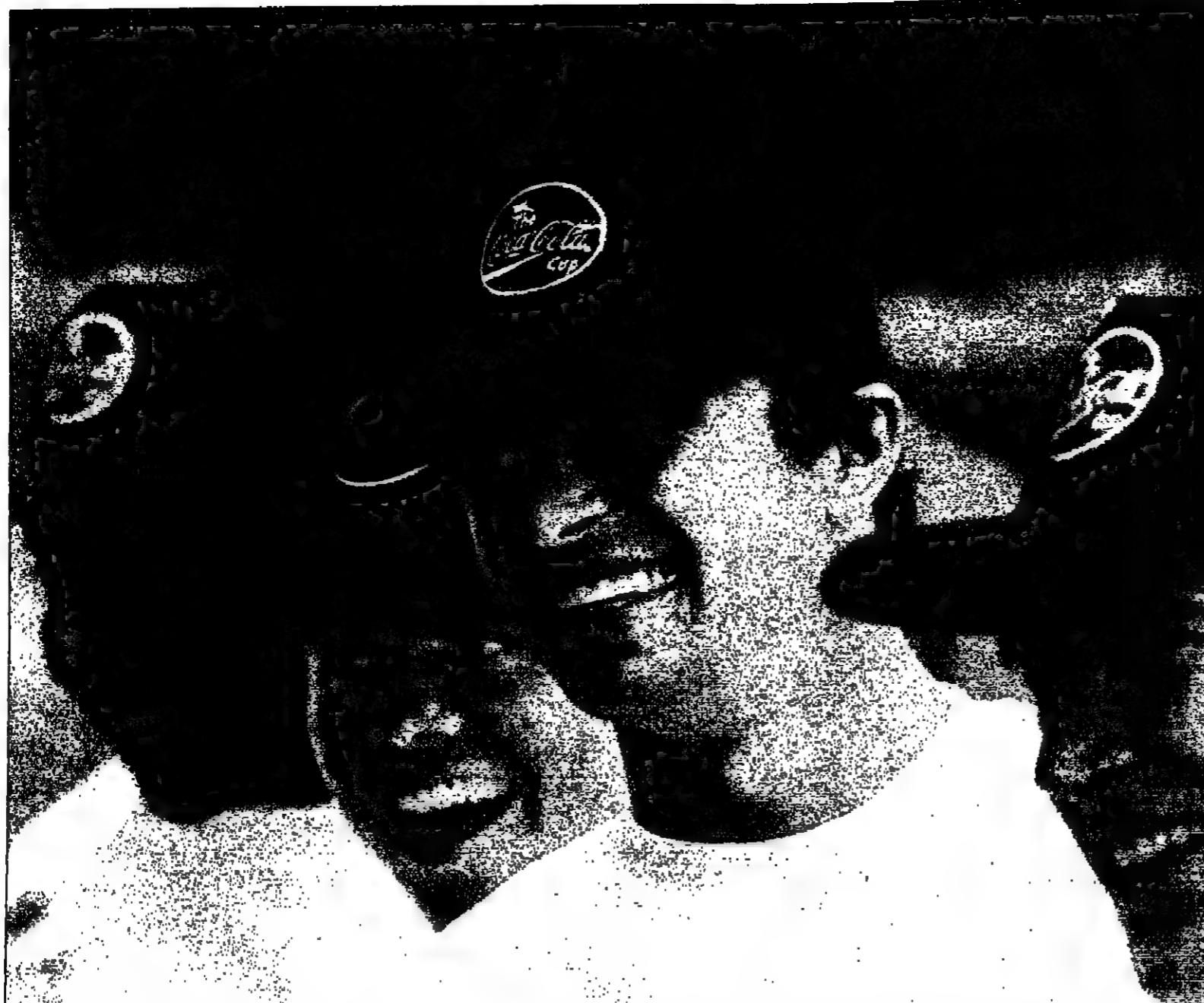
with a style every bit as open as his Tobago smile, and at last to release flair of his own that, 22 times so far this season, defences have not been able to plot against.

They are, of course, individuals in a team game, but why would anyone want to bring them to this country to try to make them scuffle, as so many home-bred players all too readily do? The sight, recently, in two wretchedly barren games, of Leeds being so fearful of Liverpool that they tried simply to negate them, was terrible.

Yeboah, instead of lurking, waiting for his phenomenal match-winning moments, was seen scurrying around the pitch, sometimes almost in the right-back position, not only wasted but wasteful because he simply has not the education to tackle properly. And yet, throw him up in the air at the other end of the field, watch him raise his body horizontal to the ground and lift either foot to score over his own head, and you have the quintessential athlete towards which a multimillion-pound game should aspire.

He is outscored, so far this season, by Yorke simply because Yeboah, who now has exactly 100 goals in 176 appearances for Eintracht Frankfurt and Leeds, was absent for eight matches, on duty with Ghana in the African Nations' Cup. Leeds won just once in those eight matches, such is his talismanic presence among them.

Of course there is much that goes into teamwork behind them. In midfield there is the battle of wiles between Andy Townsend and Gary



Speed, second right, takes his place in the Leeds United line-up at Wembley tomorrow barely a month after fracturing his cheekbone

McAllister. There is the stealth and bravery of Gary Speed, who is back barely one month after fracturing his cheekbone. And, in the three-man defences which these teams are both likely to deploy, Gareth Southgate has apparently won his fitness battle and will play two weeks after damaging ankle ligaments. Alongside him, Paul McGrath, a graduate of the hard school of football apprenticeships, loses nothing in application or footballing intelligence to Leeds's David Wetherall, who is an honours graduate in chemistry. Finally, behind all of them, stand Mark Bosnich and John Lukic, men with among the safest hands in the goalkeeping profession.

And yet, one comes again and again in analysis to the almost hypnotic parts that Yeboah and Yorke might conjure up. They have big supporting players — for Leeds Brian Deane, a graduate of Villa Savoy Milosevic — men who, if only they can believe in their talents, would surely be greater names in our game.

Perhaps Deane, a student of the foreign game, sums it up

best: "He [Yeboah] is different to anyone I've ever played with. If you watch his close control and technique, it's definitely of a different continent."

Yeboah has said that he may, by 1998 or sooner, take those talents back to Africa, where, after the dream of playing at Wembley, he hopes and intends to school his

children the way his civil servant father schooled him.

If, tomorrow, there is to be fulfilment for him, and enjoyment for us, then the two managers, Howard Wilkinson and Brian Little, will have to encourage the game to flow.

They are both more than capable of "squeezing the game", that horrible euphemism for the dreadful nega-

tion through over-bearing defence. It comes from fear, but surely Wilkinson does not fear Aston Villa in quite the way he feared Liverpool in the FA Cup?

Wilkinson's own demeanour brightened perceptively when his club won through to Wembley for the first time in 23 years. "You start off as a kid wanting to play in a cup final,

and then you start off as a manager wanting to take a team to a cup final," Wilkinson enthused. Please, Howard, let that enthusiasm rise in your soul this weekend.

He must remember his own roots when, as a miner's son in South Yorkshire, he fell in love with football the day he joined a group around a nine-inch television set owned by one of the neighbours and was bewitched by Stanley Matthews in the 1953 FA Cup Final. Wilkinson has, if he dares to use them, a couple of wingers up his sleeve.

He does not wholly seem to trust Rod Wallace and, if not, then he has the developing talent of Andy Gray, 18. But, then again, Wilkinson has also to try to trust Tomas Brohin, a half-fit Swede for whom he paid a reported £4.5 million and who, at best, is likely to rise off the substitutes' bench to add his talent to the Leeds effort.

It is intriguing, a final between equals, where the managers' throw of a dice, the daring to send on a quality player, could be both decisive and beautiful.

Wilkinson banks on imports

HOWARD WILKINSON, the Leeds United manager, visits Wembley tomorrow with more than £100,000 in prize-money and a place in next season's UEFA Cup riding on the outcome. He has, it seems, the future of his expensively-assembled side at stake.

Wilkinson has based his team-building plans around two foreign imports, Tony Yeboah and Tomas Brohin, who cost a combined £8 million in transfer fees. The bluff-talking northerner gambled on such a massive outlay to bring success to Elland Road. Now he must gamble on

victory in this one game to retain their services.

Yeboah joined Leeds barely a year ago and Brohin arrived in November, and yet both players have indicated that they will seriously consider their long-term future in English football should Leeds fail to win tomorrow. Both players are keen to continue playing in European competition, and with the Coca-Cola Cup now the only remaining route to the continent for their club, success is imperative.

"If Leeds are not in Europe then it will be a very, very difficult situation for me,"

Yeboah said. "I will retire in two or three years' time, and I need to be playing at the very top until then. I would have to consider my position carefully if we don't qualify, because it is very, very important for me to be playing in European competition."

Brohin echoed those convictions. "I will speak about my future after the last game of the season, but it is fair to say that it would be easier for me to say yes to staying if Leeds qualify for Europe. Every player wants to play in Europe; it is an important influence."

Illingworth to carry on as Graveney bows to pressure

By SIMON WILDE

NOT for the first time this year, English cricket exposed itself to the highest farce yesterday, although this time the Carry On capers were entirely off the field. Only 24 hours after being formally confirmed as a candidate for the position of chairman of selectors, David Graveney bowed to pressure from the Cricketers' Association, the players' union of which he is general secretary, and withdrew his nomination.

Graveney entered the election against Raymond Illingworth, who has been chairman since 1994, with assurances that there would not be a conflict of interest over him taking on the two roles, but that was not the opinion of some counties, nor, more important, of the association's executive, in the form of Tim Curtis and Jack Bannister, respectively chairman and president.

They anticipated insurmountable difficulties in Graveney acting as servant and master to the players, and dealing with the media on two fronts. They also doubted whether there would be time for him to perform both jobs satisfactorily.

The executive presented him with an ultimatum to choose between the jobs. After lengthy telephone calls across the Atlantic, Graveney, who is holidaying in Florida, opted to continue his full-time job with the association, although with obvious reluctance, and without conceding that he shared the executive's views.

"As a paid employee of the Cricketers' Association, I accept the instruction of the president and the chairman," a statement from Graveney read. "I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Warwickshire and Surrey for nominating me and to any other counties who might have supported me."

"I apologise for any distress this decision may have caused to them or any other party. It has always been my wish to serve the game to the best of my ability and I shall continue to do this in the future."

Graveney became the Cricketers' Association's first full-time employee in 1994, and an England selector last year. His dual commitments had caused concern before, especially when he became involved in the complaints of mistreatment made by Devon Malcolm, a player whom he had a duty to represent, against Illingworth, a fellow selector.

The indications were that Graveney would have run Illingworth very close, if not actually beaten him, in the vote, the result of which was to have been announced on Tuesday. Now, with the deadline for nominations having passed, a vote is unnecessary, and Illingworth will remain

chairman for a third year, to the immense frustration of his opponents.

"We're devastated that there will not now be an election," Paul Sheldon, the chief executive of Surrey, said. "We felt David was the right man at the right time. Our philosophy was that a younger generation must now come forward and we support the backing that Mike Gatting and David Gower had given to Graveney. Even in the brief period that he was a candidate, there was a growing base of support for David Graveney and all the indications were that it would be a close vote."

"There will be great dissatisfaction that the status quo is to be preserved. With no election now possible, the counties are effectively voting for no change in the way the England team is run and in the state of English cricket. That is totally irresponsible."



Illingworth: unopposed

Graveney, who agreed to stand when John Barclay, Illingworth's assistant during the winter, declined invitations from counties to put himself up against the chairman, had proposed in his manifesto a series of radical changes to the way that the England team was run, though there was some doubt as to whether he would be able to implement these immediately had he won.

Much of Illingworth's likely support came from those counties which felt that the status quo ought to be maintained until the results of an ongoing inquiry — chaired by David Acfield — into all aspects of the management of the England team are published later this year.

Having retained one job, Illingworth must now wait until Tuesday to see whether he will hold onto another. The Test and County Cricket Board executive committee will then review England's unhappy winter and Illingworth's position as team manager, a post he has said that he wants to relinquish in September come what may.

Curle fined and warned after disrepute hearing

By DAVID MADDOCK
AND PETER BALL

KEITH CURLE, the Manchester City captain, was fined £500 by the Football Association yesterday, and warned as to his future conduct, after admitting his guilt over a disrepute charge brought when he used foul and abusive language against Paul Alocock, the FA Cup Premier League referee. The incident occurred immediately after City's game with Everton in February, which Everton won 2-0.

"I'm glad it's over because it has been very embarrassing," Curle said. "I've never been before the FA

on a disrepute charge and yet I'm facing two in a week. I pleaded guilty but asked for my record to be taken into account."

Curle might not be as fortunate with his second appearance at Lancaster Gate. A date will be set early next week to hear charges brought against him and Faustino Asprilla, the Newcastle United forward, after two incidents involving the pair during a Premiership match last month. "I don't know if I will be pleading guilty," Curle said. "To be honest, I don't fully understand what it is they are charging me with."

Ray Harford, the Blackburn

Rovers manager, yesterday completed the signing of Garry Flitcroft from Manchester City for £3 million. He then predicted a bright future for the midfielder player.

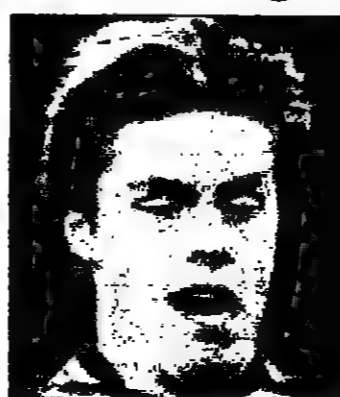
"I first worked with Garry 2½ years ago with the England under-21s and I was impressed," Harford said. "He is a complete midfielder player and I like midfield players who can score goals."

Flitcroft said: "I'm 23 and I've been fighting relegation for three years. I've seen players I was with in the England under-21s go on and I think I've stood still. Now, I hope, by coming to Blackburn, I can achieve things."

Genoa, the Italian Serie B club, has denied reports that it is the mystery buyer of the 34 per cent shareholding in Norwich City held by Robert Chase, the chairman.

Aldo Spinelli, the Genoa president, said: "I had an offer to take over a major quota in Norwich, an investment of £6 million. I know the people and love the city, but I have declined for the moment."

Chase announced on Thursday that he had agreed to sell his holding, after ten years at the club, but he declined to identify the purchasers. The sale is subject to an independent audit of the Norwich accounts.



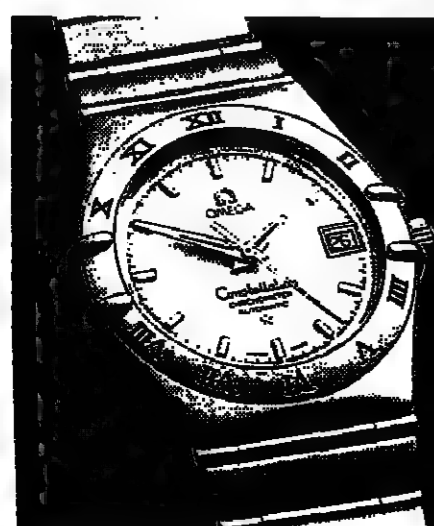
Flitcroft: bright future

Modahl clearance may follow IAAF meeting

DIANE MODAHL may receive full international clearance of a drugs offence in the next three days, as the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) council meets in Cape Town tomorrow and Monday with her case on its agenda (David Powell writes). If the IAAF has good news for Modahl, it had none yesterday for the British Athletic Federation (BAF), refusing to offer it financial support towards the defence of a High Court action in which Modahl is suing the BAF for £480,000.

A source inside the IAAF suggested yesterday that Modahl should have grounds for optimism because the council would hardly be studying the case now had its expert advisers on drugs not been impressed by new evidence. Modahl was sent home from the Commonwealth Games 19 months ago after failing a drugs test taken nine weeks earlier. A BAF appeals panel cleared her last July after an earlier BAF hearing had found her guilty.

Feeling the heat, page 47



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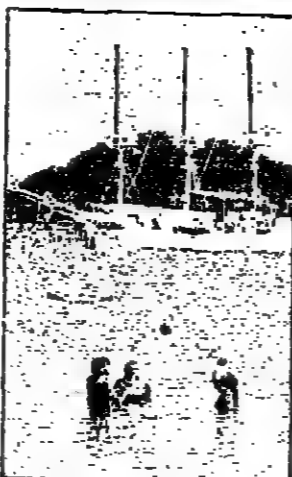


How to walk your way to excellent health

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PLUS: Derwent May's feather report, page 15

TRAVEL



Balmy days in the British Virgin Islands

Page 18

PLUS: skiing the Internet, page 17

OFFERS



Children go free at Alton Towers and Madame Tussaud's

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PLUS: audio books at reduced prices, page 15

BOOKS



Cranking up the Austen for a Sensible sequel

Page 10

PLUS: Justin Cartwright, page 11

WEEKEND

THE TIMES SATURDAY MARCH 23 1996

WHY WE WANT TO BE ALONE

by Lynne Truss



For rather obvious reasons, there are no sit-coms set in a single-person household. Tony Hancock did *The Bedsitter* in the early 1960s, and jolly good it was too, but as a dramatic genre the SPH never really took off. It's the absence of interaction that's the problem. People living on their own may occasionally slap their knees and say aloud "Cup of tea time!" or "Damn, missed *The Archers*!" but it doesn't make such good domestic drama as squabbling over who takes out the bins, or establishing which lousy varmint finished off the marmalade without saying.

Anyway, this is my theory, like it or not: that because the single household is rarely given the affirmation of the screen role model, non-singles assume it must be weird or sad or awful, and consequently have no idea what they're missing. In the film *Batman Returns*, frowzy single-householder Michelle Pfeiffer flings open the door of her lonely flat, kicks off her shoes and yells optimistically "Hi honey, I'm home!" and then slumps against the wall sighing, "Oh I forgot, I'm not married". That's the general picture of what it's like, and it's a wicked lie.

But now a fine new Marketing Intelligence (Mintel) survey (*Single Person Households: getting younger, richer and happier*) has discovered that the single household is a positive place, where people chuck about upbeat words like "freedom" and "achievement". Glad to know it's official at last, and that products will soon be aimed at those of us who can buy things on a whim without involving anybody else. In my experience, people who live alone consult their own wishes, and if this also means they pick their feet and talk for hours on the phone, who cares? They eat home-delivery pizzas without shame, straight from the box. They get lots of undisturbed sleep, and don't waste time arguing about bins or marmalade. They have the remote control in their own hands. Once I installed a catflap all by myself, and the sense of achievement I experienced was extraordinary: it was better than publishing a novel.

I shall temper the evangelical tone, but only with difficulty, for once you have achieved happiness in the single state, you hear words like "selfish" and "weird" levelled against you, and have no idea what's meant by it, save envy. It's true that single people are often excluded from the dinner party circuit, which is hurtful; but it is wrong to assume that hostesses are worried about losing their husbands to the rogue female in the low-cut top and the big lipstick. Single people make couples nervous because they are free spirits, who have kicked away the ladder of dependence. When the marital bickering starts, single people shake their heads, and say Ooh-tut-tut-tut. Like Freddie the dolphin, they made an adult decision to spend more time away from their family. "Selfish" has no meaning whatever in this context.

And as for "weird", this accusation is easily parried. "You'll get weird," your couplesome friends warn you. "You'll get set in your ways and only buy the one sort of yoghurt, and wear pyjamas all day on Sunday." But when you ask these critics outright, "Do you ever call each other Bunny Wunny in funny voices when you're at home?" they get shifty and snap, "What's that got to do with anything?" And then you've got them, because there's

Continued on page 3, col 1

SWITCH

If you're thinking of switching to digital, talk to us first.

CHOICE

Planning to see a show or a film, an exhibition or a concert? *The Times* critics select the best entertainment

MUSEUMS

John Russell Taylor

VASES AND VOLCANOES Sir William Hamilton has never had a good press, but then when did a complaisant husband or member of an enforced ménage à trois? However, as the British Museum's spectacular new spring exhibition vividly demonstrates, history has played Hamilton false by allowing him in primarily as Lady Hamilton's other quarter. He was an influential diplomat and, more importantly, an obsessed collector. Moreover, he was stationed in Naples for 35 years during the gradual excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum, so that he was on the spot for some of the most spectacular hauls. Unfortunately, he was so obsessed that he kept bankrupting himself and had to sell most of his collections (notably one of the greatest ever of painted Greek vases). All this is chronicled, with objects and copies of Hamilton's publications. Nor are the decadent Court of Naples and Emma, whom he surely collected as a beautiful object, forgotten. **British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1 (0171-636 1555).** Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm; Sun, 2.30pm, until July 14. Admission £5.50, concessions £2.

Arts, page 21, Section One

HAREWOOD HOUSE MASTERPIECES Edward Viscount Lascelles was one of the great patrons of the early 19th century, collecting art in the first heyday of such great watercolourists as Turner, Thomas Girtin and John Varley, all of whom made numerous paintings and drawings of the house and the estate. Though the collection was largely dispersed after the viscount's death, the family has succeeded in buying back a lot of what was lost, and the result, on display here, is a collection of national importance. There is also evidence that the collecting persisted among his descendants, because there are fine Samuel Palmers and excellent examples of Victorian watercolour art, including some by the queen herself. **Harewood House, Leeds (0113 288 6331).** Daily, 11am-4.30pm, until June. Admission £6, concessions £5 or £4.

DANCE

John Percival

ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET Today is the last chance to see Derek Deane's colourful new stag-



Lisa Pavane as Cinderella

ing of *Alice in Wonderland* and Sue Blaine's wonderful designs. Next week brings two further programmes, both also new here. Michael Corder has produced a new *Cinderella* (Monday to Wed-

nesday) using a more complete version of the Prokofiev score than we often hear. From Thursday comes Deane's interpretation of *Giselle*, together with Balanchine's *Square Dance*, a bravura mixture of folk charm and classic display. **London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, London WC2 (0171-632 8300).** 7.30pm; matinees Sat, 2.30pm, until March 30 (except Sunday).

SCOTTISH BALLET The programme now on tour is the best the company has shown for quite a time, combining tradition and creation at a high level. What could be more apt for Scotland's national company than *La Sylphide*, the romantic classic in which a Scottish farmer loses bride and fortune for love of a mysterious creature from the glen? Complementing this is Mark Baldwin's new ballet *Ae Fond Kiss*, which takes its title from Burns's poem and its inspiration from some of Stravinsky's most attractive ballet music, *The Divertimento* from *Le Baiser de la Fée* based on melodies borrowed from Tchaikovsky.

Edinburgh Festival Theatre, Edinburgh (0141-520 6000), today 2pm and 7.30pm; His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen (01224 641122), Tues-Sat; Eden Court Theatre, Inverness (01463 234234), April 3 to 6; Theatre Royal, Newcastle (0191 232 2061), April 9-13; New Theatre, Hull (01482 226655), April 6-20.

GALLERIES

Richard Cork

JEFF WALL An outstanding exhibition by an artist based in Vancouver, who works miracles with backlit transparencies. All mounted in aluminium lightboxes, Wall's images command an extraordinary range of moods and subjects. At his most disturbing he shows butchered Soviet soldiers rising from the dead on an Afghanistan battlefield. At his most serene he photographs the Canadian landscape with an eye for its mountainous magnificence. But he also finds disquiet in the countryside, especially when two riflemen pursue an undiscovered quarry in scrubland. Wall's use of the camera is often masterly, and always informed by a profound response to the history of Western painting.

Whitechapel Art Gallery, Whitechapel Road, London E1 (0171-522 7878), until May 5.

VISUAL ARTS UK Launching an ambitious programme of exhibitions throughout the year, the North East presents recent purchases by three national collecting bodies. In Sunderland, art and craft acquisitions by the Contemporary Art Society are handsomely displayed in the Sunderland Museum and the Reg Vardy Gallery at the University. The variety and quality of purchases are impressive, from Bridget Riley to Steven Pippin. In Newcastle, at the University's Hutton Gallery, the Arts Council's recent acquisitions make an equally lively display, ranging from a disturbing case structure by Damien Hirst to quiet, lightbox photographs of the Arts Council buyers by Catherine Yass, the show introduces visitors to some of the finest contemporary British art. So do the Tate Gallery's purchases at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, where works by Anish Kapoor, Frank Auerbach and many others culminate in a spectacular installation by Cornelia Parker; the reassembled fragments of a shed, blown up in a controlled explosion by the British Army. **Sunderland Museum (0191-565 0723) and Reg Vardy Gallery, Sunderland University (0191-515 2000); Hutton Gallery, Newcastle University (0191-222 6057); Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne (0191-232 7734), until April 13.**



From William Hamilton's collection, a wine-mixing bowl made in south Italy, circa 330 BC (see Museums)

FILM

Geoff Brown

TOY STORY (PG) The first feature cartoon generated entirely by computers is not just a dazzling technical achievement. John Lasseter's movie, produced for Disney, also packs an emotional punch, and is smart enough to appeal both to children and adults. Tom Hanks's 'Everyman' voice is just right for the hero Woody, a cowboy marionette whose position as his owner's favourite toy is threatened by the grungy Buzz Lightyear, a flashy action figure voiced by Tim Allen. Deep inside the story is a parable about belonging and friendship; the surface gleams with visual delights, chases, comedy, thrills and spills. **Odeon Leicester Square (01426 915633).**

NIXON (15) Anthony Hopkins never captures Richard Nixon's looks, but Oliver Stone's surprisingly understanding portrait allows him to bring out the man's virtues and vices. The treatment of Nixon's Quaker upbringing and his relationship with his wife Pat

(Joan Allen) are absorbing, although Stone forfeits much of his gains by juggling too hard with archive footage and slowing down the pace for a dull final hour about Watergate. Among other imperfections, the best are James Woods's Haldeman and J.T. Walsh's Ehrlichman; the worst is Bob Hoskins's openly gay J. Edgar Hoover. **MGM Trocadero (0171-434 0031); Odeon Haymarket (01426 915333); Odeon Kensington (01426 914666); Odeon Swiss Cottage (0171-586 3057); UCI Whiteleys (0171-792 3332); Warner West End (0171-437 4343).**

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

THE CHANGING ROOM David Storey's rugby-league play, first staged in 1971, more than merits its place in the Royal Court's season of "classics in the West End". What might at first seem the real action, a crunch match, occurs offstage. And what we see as the players gather before the game, tumble inside at half-time and prepare to go home has an under-

stated, documentary feel. But Storey and James Macdonald's fine cast quietly sketch in lives and relationships, leaving us with a microcosm of a changing world where fulfilment is rare and camaraderie precarious. **Duke of York's, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-836 5122), Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; matinees, Thurs and Sat, 3pm, until Sat 30.**

AN IDEAL HUSBAND The received wisdom is that *The Importance of Being Earnest* apart — Oscar Wilde wrote conventional society melodramas spiced up with the odd epigram — Peter Hall's production brilliantly challenges this view, finding a surprising depth not just in the tale of the politician with the nice wife and the killer secret in his past, but in the wit and the banter. Martin Shaw is magnificent as the dandyish but shrewd Oscar-clone, Lord Goring; but then Anna Carteret, Penny Downie, Michael Denison and the rest of a strong cast do full justice to an unobtrusively radical reading. **Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London SW1 (0171-930 8800), Mon-Sat, 7.45pm; matinees, Wed and Sat, 3pm.**

OPERA

Rodney Milnes

ARABELLA You lose some, you win some. A bit late in the day, the Royal Opera lost both the leads — Amanda Roocroft and Bryn Terfel — in its revival of Strauss's romantic comedy. Both were undertaking their roles for the first time and both apparently thought better of it. The good news is that their replacements are Cheryl Snider, whose silvery soprano is ideal for Strauss's heroine, and the experienced Wolfgang Brendel as her Balkan suitor, Anne Howells. Lillian Watson and Stafford Dean are in support, and the conductor is Mark Elder. **Royal Opera House, Bow St, London WC2 (0171-304 4000), Wed 27, 7pm.**

WERTHER English Touring Opera's engaging production of Massenet's romantic tragedy reaches Crawley, and is well worth catching for young Geraint Dodd's sensitively sung account of the title role and Christine Botes's warm-voiced, sympathetic Charlotte. Maureen Brathwaite sparkles as Sophie, and Andrew Greenwood happily catches the music's passionate ebb and flow. **The Hawth, Hawth Ave, Crawley, Sussex (01293-553636), Fri 29, 7.30pm.**

CLASSICAL

Richard Morrison

PLEETH AT 80 The Wigmore Hall hosts a very musical birthday party on Friday when William Pleeth, one of the most distinguished of postwar British string-players and teachers, celebrates his 80th birthday. In the cellist's honour his equally distinguished cellist son, Anthony, joins the Brindisi String Quartet and Trevor Pinnock (playing piano) in a programme of Haydn, Mozart and the work perhaps most associated with Pleeth: Schubert's sublime String Quintet in C. **Wigmore Hall, Wigmore St, London W1 (0171-935 2141), Fri 7.30pm.**

TAKEMITSU TRIBUTE Last month, when the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu died, harsh critics pointed out that he had written all his ground-breaking works early in his life, then tended to repeat the formula with variations. That may be accurate but misses the point: Takemitsu found an exquisite and original way of expressing himself that was contemporary yet beguiling. He was wise to stick with it. Here, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, under Andrew Davis plays his *Towards the Sea II*, followed by Mozart's Piano Concerto, K595, (Lars Vogt the soloist) and Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*. **Festival Hall, South Bank, London SE1 (0171-960 4242), Tues 7.30pm.**

JAZZ AND CABARET

Clive Davis

ANNIE ROSS/RITA COOLIDGE Closing week for two contrasting chanteuses. Annie Ross's blues and torch songs — many from her new DRG disc, *Music is Forever* — are delivered with all the authority and wit you would expect from so seasoned a performer. Better known for her soft-rock ballads, Rita Coolidge has been dipping her toe into the show-tune repertoire at the Green Room. Amid tributes to Peggy Lee, she finds space for the 1970s hits *The Way You Do The Things You Do* and *We're All Alone*. **Ross: Pizza On The Park.**

Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-235 5273), Tonight, Mon to Sat 30, 9.15pm and 11.15pm. Coolidge: Café Royal, Regent St, London W1 (0171-437 9090), Tonight, Tue 20 to Sat 30, 9.15pm.

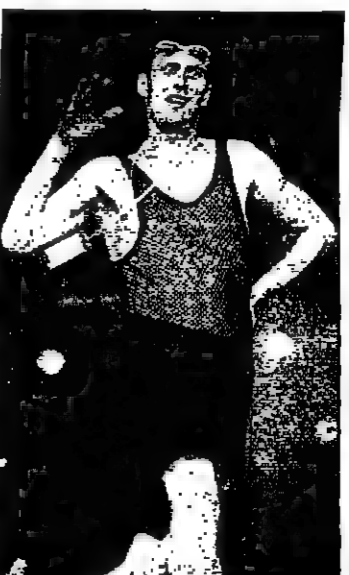
DAVE HOLLAND It was at Ronnie Scott's nearly three decades ago that Dave Holland caught the eye of Miles Davis, who subsequently enticed the young British bass player to America. An elder statesman of the ECM label, Holland has consistently produced challenging and creative small-group music. His latest quartet, which can be heard on the new album *Dream of the Elders*, features saxophonist Eric Person and Steve Nelson on vibraphone and marimba. **Ronnie Scott's Club, Frith St, London W1 (0171-439 0747), Mon 25 to Sat 30, support set from 9.30pm.**

ROCK

David Sinclair

MARIANNE FAITHFULL Although she premiered her *Evening in the Weimar Republic* show at the Brooklyn Academy of Music as long ago as 1994, and has toured it throughout Europe, these dates will mark the first time that Marianne Faithfull has performed her special programme of songs by Brecht & Weill on a British stage. Now 49 years old, the wide-eyed, convent-school girl who sang *As Tears Go By* in 1964 has weathered barely imaginable traumas. As a performer she has emerged with a cracked and croaking voice, and a rich fund of spiritual reserves at her disposal. Returns only. **Jazz Café, London NW1 (0171-344 0044), March 25, 26, 27.**

BLACK GRAPE They had to cancel an American tour after the authorities declined to issue frontman Shaun Ryder with a visa. They postponed their last British dates when rapper Kermit was hospitalised with a lung infection. And they just missed out on a Brit for Best Newcomer. But you can't keep a band as good as Black Grape down for long, and with a vocalist called Psycho standing in for the errant Kermit, they are back for another bite of the cherry. Their show remains a unique and irresistible rap'n'roll experience dubbed, on this outing, 'The Fat Neck Tour' after a new song which could be their next single. **SECC, Glasgow (0141-348 9999), March 29; Empress Ballroom, Blackpool (01253 27786), March 30; Mayfair, Newcastle upon Tyne (0191-261 2606), March 31; Dome,**



Irresistible: "Be" of Black Grape

Doncaster (0115-934 2000), April 2; Aston Villa Leisure Centre (015-934 2000), April 3; Brighton Centre (01273 202881), April 4; Tribal Gathering '96, Otmoor Park, Beckley, Oxford (0171-344 0044), May 4.

WEST END THEATRE GUIDE

Jeremy Kingston's assessment of theatre showing in London

■ House full, returns only ■ Some seats available ■ Seats at all prices

LEE EVANS The rubber-tanned stand-up transfers his so-so (excellent in a past show) *Applaud* to the West End. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Sat, 8pm; mat Sat, 4pm.**

CHAPTER TWO Tom Curren and Sharon Gless play unadorned New Yorkers visiting London, each other in Neil Simon's comedy. Not his best. **Gielgud, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5069), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

COMPANY Adrian Lester, Sheila Gish, Sophie Thompson in an excellent staging of Sondheim's belated musical on marriage, pro and contra. **Albany, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171-309 1730), Mon-Sat, 7.45pm; mat Wed and Sat 3pm.**

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED) The RSC's (reduced Shakespeare Company) popular, polky rough-hewn production of the Bard. The Complete Works, or America (abridged) plays *Titus*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *Henry VI* (171-309 1737) Wed-Sat, 8pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat, 5pm and Sun, 4pm.

UNUSUALLY YOUNG Richard O'Brien gets the satirical heat at Club Hammersmith, with a raucous, raucous, and a little rather silly play. **Comedy, Fenton Street, SW1 (0171-369 1211), Mon-Fri, 8pm; Sat 6pm and 8.30pm.**

FLESH Francis Ascham, a new music show, warblers on the theme of young performers, offering bodies. Sometimes puzzling but often full of energy. **Willesden, Drayton Road, East Croydon (0181-650 4050), Tue 6.30pm, Wed Sat, 8pm; Sun, 5pm.**

HARRY AND ME Sheila Hancock, Ron Cook, Dudley Sutton in new Nigel Williams play, a dark comedy, recording the death throes of an appalling cat show. **James Macdonald, Regent Street, SW1 (0171-736 1740), Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun March 27, 7pm.**

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT Philip Schofield plays the lead with the pretty packet in a new musical revival of the first Lloyd Webber/Rosenthal musical. **Laurel's Apollo, Queen Caroline Street,**

Harlem Nights, W6 (0171-416 6082), Tue-Sat, 7.30pm; mat Thurs and Sat, 3pm.

THE MERRYWIVES Ken Barrie and Deborah McDevlin in a updated version of Moore, now updated for the play's 15th birthday. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

AN INSPECTOR CALLS Stephen Dady's powerful production, with Nicholas Woodson as the all-knowing. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN Dana Rega's stirring production in the role of Sweden's epic drama of war. **Jonathan Kent directs a new version by David Hare. National (Oxford), South Bank, SE1 (0171-928 0282), Today, Sat, Sun and 7.15pm Mon, 7.15pm, in rep.**

FRANK: MACQUE Ed. Maca Friedman and Helen Hobson star in Sondheim's latest musical. Set in 19th-century Italy where a young soldier is torn between his mistress and his colonel's intriguing, seduced colonel, Jeremy Sams directs. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

SKYLIGHT Outstanding playing by Michael Gambon and Les Williams in David Hare's dramatization of society's conflicts in the form of a family reunion between two lovers. **Wyndham's, Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171-369 1730), Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sat 8.15pm; mat Wed, 2.30pm, Sat, 5pm.**

THE SOLDIER'S SONG James Ryan's first play tells of a Belfast family gripped that their son is an IRA man with a mission. Though he is not a rounded character, there is passion and credibility. **Theatre Royal, Gary Rathes Square, Stratford, E15 (0181-534 0310), Mon-Sat, 8pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat, 5pm.**

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A TALENT TO AMUSE The words and music of Noel Coward brought to life with a brilliant, sometimes mischievous, and a little bit of Noel Coward's own accompaniment for ten years. **Venue, Strand, WC2 (0171-836 5967), Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; mat Wed and Sat, 3pm.**

TAP DOLLS Don Pardo's secret of dancing in working-class rooms, to its building-up set. High energy act, though some dance aficionados have been unimpressed. **Lyric, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5069), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

TOMMY Hugely impressive staging of the traumatised child's approach to protest wars. **Lyric, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0171-494 5069), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Jeremy Sams plays the willow. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

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NEW RELEASES

CYCLONE (18) Over-the-top parody of the 1940s film *The Great Escape*. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

JEFFREY (18) Should a gay man have sex? Life-affirming comedy falls flat. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

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CINEMA GUIDE

Geoff Brown's assessment of films in London and (where indicated with the symbol ●) on release across the country

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS (12) Splendidly atmospheric thriller with Donald Sutherland as the ordinary Joe at the 1940s Los Angeles, a young man's obsession with a corpse, police and corruption. **Adelphi, Adelphi Street, W1 (0171-259 4404), Mon-Fri 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat Thurs 3pm, Sat 5pm.**

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INSIDE STORY

3

Continued from page 1
nothing weirder than that bunny-wunny thing.
Admittedly, the single household person can develop some odd habits when there is nobody around to draw the line. Personally, I talk to myself more or less non-stop. But the biggest danger for the person living alone is not that your selfish wishes drive you into strange compulsions to fill the hall with jam jars or old pennies or something. Rather it's the reverse: that when your own wishes are the only ones consulted, sometimes you find you can't summon any strong enough to make a decision. Domestic loopholes thus widen and deepen until they are veritable mantraps with spikes in. For example, you might ask yourself, in front of a sink full of dirty plates, "Where do I stand on this washing up issue?" and instead of answering, switch the light off and go to bed with a Kilkat.

When I first lived alone, I quickly identified the greatest freedom for the single woman: that when things go wrong with the washing machine or the central heating, she can "get a man in". She makes the decision: she consults the Yellow Pages; a day or so later a taciturn fellow in overalls turns up with a spanner and sets to. What a relief, not to negotiate this minefield with the boyfriend, who has always fancied himself in a Zanussi boilersuit, and whose ego when he breaks the washing machine has to be handled with extreme delicacy. "Bang. Clink. Oops. How did that happen?" is possibly the most miserable sequence of noises ever heard by cohabiting women, while the worst sight is the room filled with pink brick dust where all-day drilling has failed to result in shelving of any kind.

Actually, I was always happy in couples. I am fairly good at living with other people. I like men generally, and am much less bitter and suspicious than many married women my age. But old Tim Rice got it right when he wrote that deathless line in the hit

CELEBRITY SINGLES

Madonna
Siân Phillips
Germaine Greer
Sir Cliff Richard
Diane Keaton
Doris Lessing
Muriel Spark
Ted Heath
Jeffrey Bernard
Shirley Conran
Stephen Fry
Barbara Cartland
Gordon Brown
Joan Collins

song *I Know Him So Well* which went, "No one is completely on your side". It's true: we are all alone really, when it boils down to it. The rest is just wishing. I remember the day, years ago, when I found an orange folded plastic thing under the bed on the boyfriend's side and asked him innocently, "What's this?" "It's a smoke hood," he said. "In the event of fire, I can put it over my head and get out of the flat without succumbing to life-threatening fumes." I looked at it, and turned it over in my hands. "Is there just the one?" I wanted to ask, but I knew I couldn't face the inevitable answer. So I put it back under the bed and thought what a profound fellow Tim Rice was, if he did but know it.

So the Mintel people find that by the year 2000, 30 per cent of households in this country will be single-person. Advertisers will take note. The image of the sad person with the TV dinner will be completely overturned, to become a happy person with a TV dinner. As the ads for *Get Shorty* keep telling us, attitude plays a part. One day they will remake *Batman Returns*, and Michelle Pfeiffer will enter that flat again, kick her shoes off and say glumly, "Hi honey, I'm home," and then she'll brighten up. "Oh I forgot!" she'll say, "I'm not married!"

● Lynne Truss's book about single life, *Making the Cat Laugh* (Hamish Hamilton, £9.99).



Madonna loves the limelight but, at home in America, this material girl is singularly happy alone



Lynne Truss and her feline companion, Buster



Sir Cliff Richard is content to be a bachelor boy

THE BIG SPENDERS

People in single households spend:
☐ 49 per cent more on tobacco
☐ 23 per cent more on cereals
☐ 10 per cent more on bread
☐ 9 per cent more on organic foods
☐ 30 per cent more on fares and travel
☐ 26 per cent more on household services
☐ 36 per cent more on fuel, light and power
☐ 49 per cent more on housing
☐ 21 per cent less on motorcar
☐ 23 per cent less on meat
 Source: Mintel: Single Person Households: getting younger, richer and happier, 1995 (0171-506 6000)

By the year 2000, the number of people living alone will increase by 1.2 million to 8 million, according to Mintel's latest survey (see left). This could be good news for any Chancellor looking for ways to increase consumer spending. Non-retired, single-person households spend 10.5 per cent more than non-retired people living in a two-adult household. The taxman would be happy too. Income from VAT would rise significantly.
 The public sector borrowing requirement could be paid off in weeks by the increase in spending on tobacco and alcohol by this new mass of solitary, non-retired people. Each person in a two-adult household buys roughly a packet of cigarettes per week, whereas a person living alone puffs through a packet and a half. They also drink nearly 35 per cent more alcohol than the individual in a two-adult household. Food consumption would only be affected marginally — singles spend 2.1 per cent more than sharers. Non-retired single people may become drunk, cancerous and slightly fatter, but at least we might not be in debt.
 These figures apply to those who are not retired. With those who are, the

Singles with spending power

picture is a little different. Solitary pensioners dependent on the state spend £75.67 per week, whereas two similarly dependent pensioners living together spend £72.32 each per week: a difference of 4.6 per cent. The figures for pensioners who do not depend on the state are £142.91 and £118.42: a difference of 20.7 per cent. (Interestingly, the poorer the single pensioner, the more he or she smokes. The solitary state-dependent pensioner spends £2.10 on tobacco, whereas those who are not state dependent spend £1.30.)
 The average weekly expenditure for all single-person households (retired and non-retired) is £147.17, and for shared households the figure is £145.56

per person; a difference of £1.61 per person. This means that by 2000, consumer expenditure could increase by just over £100 million a year.
 There are non-financial benefits too. With the increase in single-person households, the nation's gardens will be better maintained. In a sample week last year, 67 per cent of singles carried out some form of gardening, whereas only 56 per cent of sharers got their fingers green. We will be a better-read nation as well. Seventy-eight per cent of singles read books for up to one or more hours per week, whereas the figure for those who share was a derisory 65 per cent.

But the increase has its downside. For a start, we will be less fit, because only 54 per cent of singles exercise in a given week, whereas for sharers the figure is 61 per cent. Social security bills may increase. The family is effectively an unpaid social security system, but the state will need to subsidise those who live on their own and are incapable of, say, cleaning.
 The predicted increase in the single-householder population will have a huge impact on housing. Thirty per cent of singles live in flats, which means that 360,000 more flats may have to be found by 2000. Twenty-six per cent of singles live in their own terrace house, which means that 312,000 more terrace houses could be occupied by singles by the same year. This may lead to an increase in house prices. An increase in single-person households means an increase in the number of households, which will mean a greater demand for housing.
 However, the dearth of suitable properties available for single people may just stop this explosion of wannabe hermits.

Cover image of Greta Garbo by C. S. BULL, The Kobal Collection

GUY WALTERS

21 REASONS TO LIVE ALONE

- 1 The bathroom is always free.
- 2 There are no male fingerprints in the moisturiser.
- 3 Toenails can be clipped while watching television.
- 4 Permanent nudity.
- 5 The phone is always for you.
- 6 There's always some milk left in the fridge.
- 7 Nobody can moan about the pile of washing-up.
- 8 "Air guitar" can be played without observation.
- 9 Books never mysteriously disappear.
- 10 Housemates and family members who have lost their keys will never ring your doorbell at 2am.
- 11 Freedom to enjoy playing your own music.
- 12 Not having to pretend you like your housemate's or spouse's friends.
- 13 Everything you break is yours.
- 14 You can change channel as often as you want, to whatever you want.
- 15 Nobody can see you looking dreadful.
- 16 Food can be prepared at any time of the night.
- 17 There are no arguments over phone bills.
- 18 Car engines can be stripped down in the kitchen.
- 19 There is no pressure to hold dinner parties.
- 20 There is nobody to lose the household sticky-tape/scissors/envelopes.
- 21 The deep, deep peace of the unshared double bed, and the hurly burly of the chaise longue.



Andrew Daniels and Ruth Gledhill after their marriage was blessed

Ruth Gledhill, the *Times* religion correspondent, is the subject of the column she usually writes each week

Dancing duo defy the trend

The *Times* At Your Service and religion correspondent Ruth Gledhill and Andrew Daniels, a former champion Old Time dancer, have defied the trend discussed above and abandoned single life. They married a month ago, far from cold, damp Britain on the sun-drenched St James' beach in Barbados. With only an Anglican priest present, the couple asked two fellow holidaymakers to be witnesses to the wedding.
 But after their Caribbean privacy, the newlyweds wanted a blessing of their marriage back in Britain for family, friends and colleagues. Even after the move of so many famous newspapers from their spiritual home in Fleet Street, the couple chose the Street's traditional journalists' church, St Bride's, for their service.
 The Archbishop of York, Dr David Hope, officiated and preached at the service. Wearing episcopal cope and gold mitre, he referred in his homily to the couple meeting on the dance floor on Val-

entine's Day last year. "Ruth and Andrew will be doing their fair share of dancing in their hearts as well as on their feet," he said.
 Throughout the service, the Archbishop was assisted by the Rector of St Bride's, Canon John Oates and the father of the bride, the Rev Peter Gledhill.
 Fortunately, no big religious news story broke last Saturday because all the national newspaper religion correspondents were at St Bride's, along with other journalists, as well as Andrew's colleagues — "he works in finance" — and other friends, including the two witnesses from Barbados. The congregation was a curious mixture of journalists, dancers, family, clergy and business people.
 The couple dedicated themselves to each other after two contrasting readings — Ecclesiastes 2 (a time to mourn and a time to dance) and George Herbert's poem *Love Bade me Welcome*.
 Dr Hope blessed the rings as "a sign of our marriage" and the

couple promised "all that I have I give to you, all that I am I share with you, within the love of God".
 The Archbishop referred to the challenge of faithfulness: that marriage is "truly an awesome vocation and commitment for which daily you will need God's help".
 The new bride looked beautiful in a dress which was a clever combination of wedding and ballroom. She and her husband looked ready to launch into a waltz at any moment. They selected two of the most popular, traditional hymns for their service, *Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer* and *Jerusalem*, and two modern songs, *Be Still* and *Amazing Grace*.
 The bride's father, a retired priest in the Church of Wales, added a wonderful, personal touch to his daughter's blessing when he offered intercessions in Welsh and the responses in English.
 As he burst into Welsh, some of the journalists, wondering at first if he was "speaking in tongues", looked around the church to see if

any others were blessed by such gifts of the spirit.
 Naomi Hyamson, a sub-editor at *The Times*, sang *Laudamus Te* by Bach as the couple were congratulated in the vestry after the liturgy. Printed on the order of service *Nuntians Quid Novi* (Arr. R Jones) looked a new innovation as a wedding march. In a happy final touch *New York, New York* in "sing something simple" style brought huge smiles to the newly blessed couple and congregation, who then headed off to the reception at the Waldorf Hotel, where the afternoon tea dance was in full swing as guests arrived.
 Indeed, the whole day was a joyful celebration of a new beginning — a life shared and a love which flourishes after that first glance on the dance floor.

ROB MARSHALL

● The Rev Rob Marshall is media adviser to the Archbishop of York.
 ● St Bride's Church, Fleet St, London, EC4Y 3AU (0171-553 1301).

AT YOUR SERVICE

A five-star guide

RECTOR:
Canon John Oates
ARCHITECTURE:
A Wren gem known as the Wedding Cake church. The congregation face each other in choir stalls. ★★★★★
HOMILY:
A challenging charge from the Archbishop of York wishing the couple "good luck in the name of the Lord". ★★★★★
MUSIC:
Well-known hymns and anthems, with a final surprise from the Big Apple. ★★★★★
LITURGY:
Despite the presence of an archbishop and several priests (including a chaplain to the Queen), the service was informal. The formal dedication of the couple one to another was the highlight. ★★★★★
AFTER SERVICE CARE:
On a Sunday it's juice and coffee at St Bride's. For Ruth and Andrew, the Waldorf. ★★★★★
SPIRITUAL HIGH:
A joyous and memorable occasion. ★★★★★

AN ENTERTAINING OFFER FROM ROYAL DOULTON. 20% OFF
 A SELECTED RANGE OF CHINA FOR A LIMITED PERIOD ONLY.

Add to your existing dinner service, or start collecting a new one. Choose from a special selection of Minton, Royal Albert and Royal Doulton fine bone china tableware at greatly reduced prices. From selected department stores and china specialists. *RRP

OFFER

9

THIS SPRING YOU CAN TAKE UP TO TWO CHILDREN FREE TO ANY OF EIGHT TUSSAUDS GROUP ATTRACTIONS

Two children go FREE on a Tussauds day out — save up to £26

The Times and The Tussauds Group are offering readers the chance to take two children free to any one of eight Tussauds attractions throughout April and May, saving up to £26.

There are white-knuckle rides and haunted woodlands, ice skating shows and circuses, a grisly Chamber of Horrors and an adventure into space, simulated rock concerts and medieval pageants. Everything that will keep children happy and entertained is on offer here and at two theme parks in Spain and Holland.



The Runaway Mine Train, at Chessington, is set in the Wild West and has no driver and no brakes — just lots of fun for both adults and children

CHESSINGTON WORLD OF ADVENTURES SAVE £26

The theme park reopens today for another season of fun, thrills and excitement for all the family. The park was originally Chessington Zoo until an £18 million re-fit turned it into one of the South's leading outdoor leisure attractions. Rare and endangered species, such as snow leopards and Sumatran tigers, can be seen in landscaped enclosures reflecting their natural habitat.

There is a new circus, a Hansel and Gretel-style land for toddlers, a Vampire roller-coaster and, set in a wild western Calamity Canyon, the Runaway Mine Train, an exhilarating Dragon River water ride and the disorientating Rameses Revenge, the only ride in the UK with a three way fear factor of height, speed and water which suspends the brave over water fountains for up to ten seconds.

World of Adventures

Prices: Adult £16.50 Child (under 15) £13.00
Open: 10am-5pm (until 9.30pm July 30-Sept 1)
Visitor info: 01372 727227
12 miles from London on A243, 2 miles from A3 and M25 junction 9 in Surrey



Children love the thrill of getting soaked as they hurtle along the Congo River Rapids at Alton Towers

ALTON TOWERS SAVE £26

This theme park won an award last year for being the most parent friendly. It has more than 125 rides from the Force 9 gale of the Energizer to the 0-60 mph power of the Thunderlooper.

There is also Storybook

Land with Squirrel Nutty and his acorn tree top ride and the Bookworm, an animated storytelling character.

Just open is the Alton Towers Hotel where there are rooms full of magic and wonders like a 37ft high Jules Verne style flying machine, a Fizzy Factory and Chocolate Factory which never run out of the children's favourite goodies.

Prices: Adult £17
Child (under 14) £13
Open: 9am to dusk
Visitor info: 0990 204060
From North: M6 junction 16 or M1 junction 28. From South: M6 junction 15 or M1 junction 23A in Staffordshire

MADAME TUSSAUDS SAVE £11.50

Madame Tussaud's is one of the capital's most popular visitor attractions. The Chamber of Horrors, revamped with a £1 million investment, has authentic sound and visual effects, life like figures and realistic settings to illustrate macabre murders from the French Revolution to the present day. New arrivals join as Pierce Brosnan, left, join the famous waxworks and the Spirit of London recreates scenes from the 1666 Great Fire to today.

MADAME TUSSAUDS BAKER STREET LONDON

Prices: Adult £8.75 Child (under 16) £5.75
Open: 10am-5.30pm
Visitor info: 0171-935 6801
Tube Station: Baker Street

LONDON PLANETARIUM SAVE £7.50

A popular visitor attraction for nearly 40 years, the London Planetarium has the most advanced star projector in the world — Digistar II.

Space enthusiasts can enjoy interactive videos and watch a spectacular show which starts with sunrise over Stonehenge, moves on past distant galaxies and even travels down the optic nerve of the human eye to show how our perception of the universe has changed.

With the naked eye we can see a maximum of 2,000 stars but Digistar II can project images of 9,000 stars.

PLANETARIUM

Prices: Adult: £5.45
Child (under 16, not recommended for under 15s) £3.60
Show times: 12.20-5pm (every 40 minutes)
Visitor info: 0171-935 6801
Tube station: Baker Street for Marylebone Road

WARWICK CASTLE SAVE £10.50

Fortified by William the Conqueror in 1068 and with gardens landscaped by Capability Brown, children love to explore the dungeon, or climb up to the towers and ramparts of this magnificent medieval castle.

Through a combination of special effects, children can experience the sights, smells and sounds of a household as it gets ready for a bloody war and they can experience, through the simulated historical story, the ruthless Richard Neville's plans in Kingmaker — A Preparation for Battle.

WARWICK CASTLE

Prices: Adult £8.75 Child (under 17) £5.25
Open: 10am-6pm
Visitor info: 01926 406600
M40 junction 15, Warwick, Warwickshire

ROCK CIRCUS SAVE £11.90

Visitors are taken through a celebration of thirty years of pop and rock using audio-animatronic technology. The Music Revolution Theatre, the largest revolving auditorium in Europe, is possibly the only place to see the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and

David Bowie perform together. Each visitor has a personal headset activated by infra-red beams.



Prices: Adult £7.50
Child (Under 16) £5.95
Open: S/M/A/W/Th 11am-9pm
Fri/Sat 11am-10pm
Tues 12-9pm
Visitor info: 0171-734 7203
Tube station: Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Square

PORT AVENTURA, SPAIN SAVE £3

Live shows in air conditioned theatres include acrobats from Peking and a Mexican dance troupe. Also one of Europe's scariest rollercoasters, Dragon Khan, which turns its riders upside down eight times during the three-minute ride at up to 70 mph.

Prices: Adult £19.50
Child (under 13) £16
Night tickets £12.50 and £9
Open: 10am-8pm (until midnight high season)
Visitor info: 0800-96 65 40
Salou, south of Barcelona



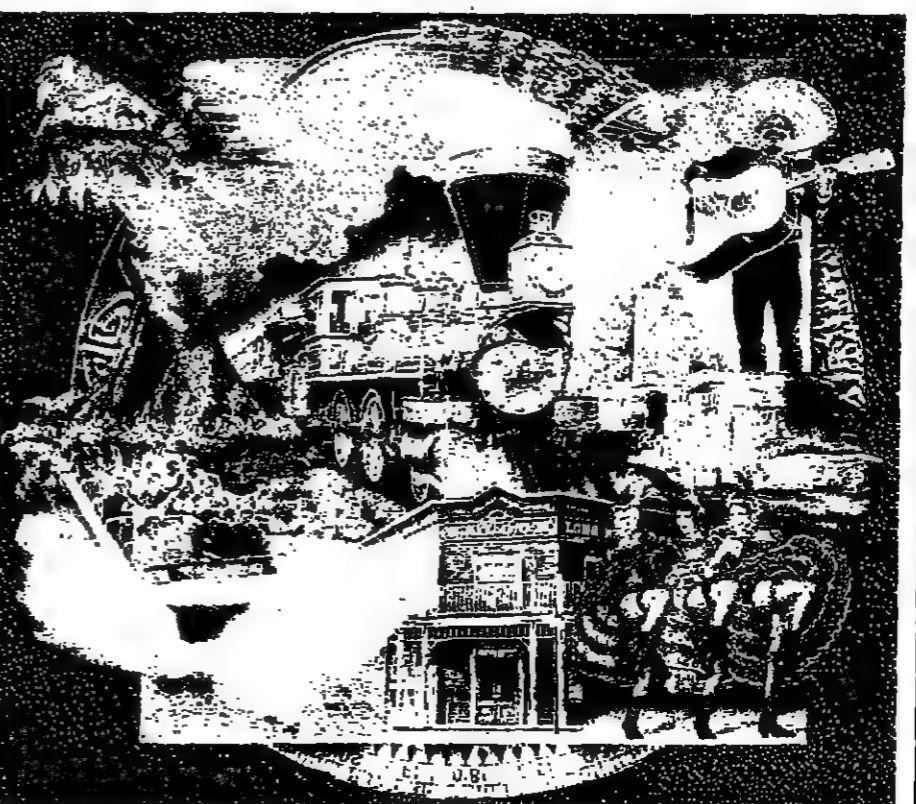
At Warwick Castle children can play soldiers in real armour

MADAME TUSSAUD SCENERAMA, HOLLAND SAVE £12

A celebration of Holland's 17th century Golden Age. Themes of everyday life, some based on works by Dutch masters Rembrandt and Vermeer, are enhanced with sound, light and special effects.

MADAME TUSSAUD SCENERAMA

Dam Square, Amsterdam.
Prices: Adult £7.50
Child (under 15) £6
Opens: 10am-5.30pm every day, including Christmas Day
Visitor information: 003120 6239239



When the sun and sand in Spain get too much you can take the children to Port Aventura

HOW TO APPLY

Collect four differently numbered tokens from the seven we will print in *The Times* and attach them to the voucher (right).

One token is already attached. More will appear every day until the final one next Saturday, March 30, 1996.

Complete the details on the voucher and present it at the ticket office at the attraction you decide to visit.

You will be entitled to up to two free child entries per party when paying one full adult admission.

The voucher can only be used for one visit to any one attraction.

OFFER CONDITIONS

1. The offer is valid for two children free when accompanied by one paying adult.
2. The offer applies from March 30 to May 31 1996 inclusive.
3. One voucher per household.
4. Any additional visitors in your party, children or adults, must pay the full admission prices.
5. Vouchers must be accompanied by four *Times/Tussauds* tokens.
6. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.
7. Vouchers must be cut from *The Times*. No photocopied vouchers or tokens will be accepted.
8. Please note height restrictions apply on certain rides at the three theme parks.
9. This offer is only valid for a single day rate at any of the three theme parks.

TUSSAUDS GROUP FREE ENTRY FORM

Mr/Ms/Other _____ Initials _____ Surname _____
BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE
Address _____
Postcode _____ Home phone _____

It would help us if you answered these four questions:

1. Which of the following age groups do you fall into? (Please tick box)
☐ 15-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65+

2. Which national daily newspaper(s) do you buy regularly (4-6 copies) during the week?

3. Which national daily newspaper(s) do you buy occasionally (3 copies or less) during the week?

4. Which national Sunday newspaper(s) do you buy regularly (2-4 copies a month)?

This voucher, with four *Times/Tussauds* Group tokens attached, entitles the bearer to free entry for up to two children, when accompanied by one paying adult to any one of the following attractions: Madame Tussaud's, The London Planetarium, Rock Circus, Warwick Castle, Scenerama, Alton Towers, Chessington World of Adventures and Port Aventura. Offer valid from March 30 to May 31 inclusive and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.

THE TIMES

The

TUSSAUDS

Group

TOKEN ONE

AFFIX ANOTHER
TOKEN HERE

AFFIX ANOTHER
TOKEN HERE

AFFIX ANOTHER
TOKEN HERE

True-life detective adventures belong on the mean streets and down dark alleys, not on the Internet, says John Diamond

Sick of the cybersleuths

IMAGINE: it is 1922 and the BBC has just opened up for business. Radio is the coming thing: the papers have all started radio supplements with radio know-alls rating the newest sets and listing the best new stations. And all over the world bookshops have started filling their shelves with radio manuals which promise to help timid radio virgins to jump on this new bandwagon. Publishers believe that radio is where the money is and so they look for new ways to sell radio books.

The answer? True-life radio crime. There are books about grand-thefted radio repairmen mixing it with evil valve-counterfeiter.

There are books about rugged broadcast detectives who will leap onto a plane at a moment's notice to scout out illegal radio stations. There are books about dinner-jacketed young aristocrats taking on the Communies who are trying to jam the radio stations of the free world. An unlikely hypothesis? Well certainly the radio craze of the 1920s did not produce such literary thief-

TAKEDOWN
By Tsutomu Shimomura
Secker & Warburg, £9.99

takers. So why do publishers today believe that there is such demand for their Internet equivalents? The genre started in 1990 with Clifford Stoll's *Cuckoo's Egg*, the excellently told story of how Stoll tracked a hacker of military secrets,

and that is where it should have stopped. But each season since has brought a new clutch of heroic tales of men who dash fearlessly about the Internet dishing it with the punks who steal the Net's secrets. Shimomura is the latest and the most risible. It is not that I am ungrateful: I am only too pleased that this scientific prodigy was able to set up the routines which caught

Kevin Mitnick, stealer of mobile-telephone software and Internet passwords or, as the book has it, "the world's most notorious cybercriminal". I am, after all, a mobile-telephone owner and an Internet user and recognise that the Mitniks of this world spoil it for the rest of us.

But I cannot bring myself to be excited by the minutiae of the hunt.

even when those banal technical details are recounted in a breathless parody of a police procedural novel. And I certainly cannot be convinced that the details of Shimomura's hobbies — in-line skating and cross-country skiing — add to the excitement any more than does a sub-plot about the wooing of his girlfriend.

Happily there is a simplified version of the book — and one which, with its pictures and full audio details, really does give a sense of the excitement the reader is meant to feel. It is written by Shimomura and is available — free — on the Web: <http://www.takedown.com/>.

NOVELS IN BRIEF

Fiends, relations and other lovers

■ TAPES OF THE RIVER DELTA
By Peter Cunningham
Arrow, £5.99

PETER CUNNINGHAM'S novel is an unsettling combination of family saga and thriller but transcends both categories. His narrator, Theo Shortcourse, is a civil servant, based in Dublin, whose life has been overshadowed by his ruthless but charismatic cousin, Bain Cross — now a powerful figure in the Irish Government. Theo and Bain have been rivals since boyhood, when both competed for the affection of Theo's beautiful mother, Sparrow. Theo's relationships have otherwise failed. Cunningham's portrayal of the power relations within families underlies his analysis of Irish political life. The result is an ingenious and chilling tale of thwarted ambitions and betrayal.

■ THROWING THE HOUSE OUT OF THE WINDOW
By Ben Richards
Headline, £12.99

JAMIE COLLINS is the housing officer for a run-down East London estate, a job which involves him in all kinds of problems, such as the harassment of an Asian family by local racists. Jamie also has more personal conflicts when his girlfriend Helen leaves him and he takes up with *louché* Iona, whose promiscuous behaviour masks an underlying vulnerability. Then Jamie meets Ana Maria, a beautiful Chilean girl, and finds his world turned upside down. Ben Richards's accomplished first novel convincingly evokes the energy and angst of contemporary urban life.

■ & GILLIAN
By Alvin Rakoff
Little, Brown, £12.99

IN ALVIN RAKOFF'S moving novel, Robin, an American in London, is married to Gillian, who is diagnosed as having cancer. At first, she resists any suggestion that her illness is fatal, but this conviction becomes ever harder to sustain. Robin finds his own strength undermined by the need to put on a brave face. An encounter with a young woman on a trip to Paris seems to offer an escape — but Robin discovers that he is incapable of such a betrayal. Rakoff's unsparring account of bereavement is mitigated by his affectionate portrayal of married life.

■ LOOSE CHIPPINGS
By Ian Ogilvy
Headline, £16.99

TO FEND off the Inland Revenue, Frederick, Marquis of Steepleforth, sells his sprawling ancestral home to a shady American, the Rev Jim Pohackett, for a large sum. Mr Pohackett has designs not only on Gravelly Place, his newly-acquired mansion, but also on the local village church, where he intends to find fresh converts to his own brand of fundamentalism. But of course he has reckoned without the peculiar apathy of the British in matters of religion. The author is best known as a television actor, and there is something of the television mini-series about this outlandish comedy, which pokes fun at a whole range of targets, from the British aristocracy to the American predilection for bizarre religions.

CHRISTINA KONING

Reconditioned Austen in good running order

EMMA TENNANT has made a deserved success out of her sequels to Jane Austen. In *Pemberley* and *An Unequal Marriage* she revealed un-dreamt-of pitfalls in the careers of the Bennet sisters just when we thought *Pride and Prejudice* had them settled down nicely. Now it is the turn of *Sense and Sensibility*.

Aside from their romantic and financial anxieties, the Dashwood girls could be said to have rather quiet lives in Austen's original. A sprained ankle or an unexpected visitor could be moments of high drama. The novel is long on reflection and evenings round the piano, and on the whole rather short on corpses and chicanery. But now that the sisters have been lionised by Hollywood, it was probably inevitable that their subse-

■ ELINOR AND MARIANNE
By Emma Tennant
Simon & Schuster, £9.99

quent adventures should involve mothers-in-law performing Spanish fandangos on dinner tables, free-love communes of guitar-playing vegetarians and cannibalism in darkest Africa.

Restraint may have gone by the board in the plot development, but Tennant retains her gift for capturing Austen's tone and humour, and there is a mad logic to the wildest turn of events. The hints are all there in the original. Tennant simply lets them run.

Austen's happy denouement is shown to be a fragile one. Colonel Brandon, her only truly sensible character in the modern sense of the word, is

promptly packed off on an errand to Wales where he remains for the duration of the story. Without his calming influence, Elinor's excess of restraint and Marianne's total lack of it prove completely unequal to fending off their rapacious in-laws and coping with the return of the scoundrel Willoughby. Everything goes hilariously to pot.

Elinor and Marianne, like *Sense and Sensibility* in its first version, is written in the form of letters. It is not an easy form to get into, and perhaps a dramatic personae would have saved us from the clumsy references to "our half-brother John and his wife, Fanny". But the telling is skilful and elegant, and much entertainment is to be had.

ROSE WILD



Guys and a doll: Katharine Hepburn stars with Cary Grant and James Stewart in George Cukor's comedy *The Philadelphia Story* — from Katharine Hepburn. *An Independent Woman* by Ronald Bergen (Bloomsbury, £20)

Just the ticket for the nomadic bookworm

Any colour as long as it's local — a catalogue of travel reading that includes every genre of writing

HAVING founded the first dedicated travel bookshop in London, Sarah Anderson has now done us another good turn by compiling the first resource menu of English-language travel titles. Her known passion for the subject does not come through in her generally neutral style, so inclusion must mean tacit approval.

Even travel professionals, who most often seem liable to get lost, should easily find their way around. The basic divisions are by continent, then alphabetically by country. Three separate indexes locate authors, titles and places. Works in print (when it went to press) get a tick.

Furthermore, in tune with the practice of specialist shops in recent years, she layers in

■ ANDERSON'S TRAVEL COMPANION
By Sarah Anderson
Scolar Press, £39.50

many more that never knew they were travel books — novels, history, etc. — but now have their exotic side stressed. See Naples and not only read Craufurd Tait Ramage's *Nooks and Byways of Italy* (1868) but Yourcenar's *Anna Soror*, a tale of incestuous Neapolitan passion.

The difficulty with this catholic approach, nice for browsers, is that the world is not a small place: the fiction, travelogues, politics, sociology and guides cannot all be packed in 550 pages. The jacket puff by Geoffrey Moorhouse calls it "exhaustive", but it is not. It could not be. For



In harmony: the San Carlo Opera House in Naples

example: the China quota is 120 titles, quite enough to ballast a journey, but only a fraction of the 2,000 housed in the China Club in Hong Kong. The stream of fiction makes an estuary that leads to the open sea. It is irresistible to include certain imaginary

travel stories, so she chooses Robinson Crusoe and *Lost Horizon* (why not, then, *Gulliver's Travels* and *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*). But fiction that happens merely to have a strong local flavour, however tasty, such as a science-fiction work on post-

holocaust Labrador, is usurping space.

It leads to curious anomalies, such as the presence of Golding's splendid novel *The Spire* and the absence of his *Egyptian Journal*, a lesser work but all about his travel down the Nile on a felucca.

Checking my own shelves, I see that of the first 50 titles she includes 28. But I do not feel she has missed many great reads. Lord Byron is worth a better show, and his friend Hobhouse a mention. Eric Newby appears *passim*, but not my favourite. *The Last Grain Race*. The Huxley clan is there in force, but not my favourite. *The Affable Savage* and of a good work on voodoo, researched in Haiti roughly when Greene was absorbing material for *The Comedians*.

Anderson invites suggestions for future editions — a regular event, I hope.

ALEX HAMILTON

A doctorate in despair

ONE OF the many diverting minor characters in *The House Guest* is a very small, very straightforward woman called Shara, whom the hero, Robin Dromgoole, likes so much that when he sees her he thinks, "Good. There's Shara. Good."

The sighting of a new book by Barbara Anderson has the same effect on her growing number of admirers.

The House Guest is part literary quest, part voyage of discovery; in some ways not dissimilar to Carol Shields's tender and ingenious literary puzzle, *Mary Swann*, which, like Anderson's novel, sets an accomplished writer in rural isolation. Shields's Mary Swann writes poetry in rustic Ontario; Anderson's Alice O'Leary, the house guest of the title, gives up writing novels in a New Zealand farmhouse.

Dromgoole is studying Alice for his PhD and needs to know why she stopped writing long before she died 20 years before. Robin has a painful history: soon after his marriage, his wife, Lisa, died on a weekend trip into the bush, which is perhaps why Alice, "who specialised in despair", appeals to him so much. Also the fact that, as a small boy, he actually saw Alice, who was staying with his next-door neighbour, Miss Bowman, and left the house in tears.

The mystery of Alice's last years turns out to have a lot to do with Miss Bowman's niece, Emmeline, a skittish actress

■ THE HOUSE GUEST
By Barbara Anderson
Cape, £14.99

who, without being false to Lisa, Robin has always loved. Robin is one of the most generously affectionate men in literature. Although in his darkest moments, he mutters, "All slogging on. Crashing about. Getting it wrong", he is full to the brim with understanding and empathy. His



Anderson: deceptively clever

concern for Emmeline in her moment of crisis is all over her face. Every character in this novel is a little masterpiece, brought to buoyant life in Anderson's idiomatic, jumpy sentences. This is a writer with flawless observation and an offhand knack of making you forget just how clever she really is.

PENNY PERRICK

TIMES BOOKS

THURSDAY

Gitta Sereny on mankind's complicity in slaughter.
Credo, Melvyn Bragg's novel of the Dark Ages

The Times/Dillons Bestsellers

HARDBACK			
		Last week	No. weeks
1	PRIMARY COLORS Anonymous (Chatto & Windus)	£15.99	2 3
2	KEN HOM'S HOT WOK BOOK Ken Hom (BBC)	£16.99	2 4
3	ROGUE TRADER Nick Leeson (Little, Brown)	£16.99	3 3
4	THE COLLAPSE OF BARINGS Stephen Fay (Richard Cohen)	£20	0 1
5	SHOCKWAVE Clive Cassler (Scribner/Simon & Schuster)	£16.99	9 2
6	CROSS CHANNEL Julian Barnes (Cape)	£10.99	0 3
7	IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY Elizabeth George (Bantam)	£16.99	0 3
8	ELIZABETH Sarah Bradford (Heinemann)	£20	0 4
9	THE UPSTART Catherine Cookson (Bantam)	£15.99	8 2
10	EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE Daniel Goleman (Bloomsbury)	£16.99	5 9

PAPERBACK			
		Last week	No. weeks
1	SOPHIE'S WORLD Jostein Gaarder (Phoenix)	£4.99	1 2
2	BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM Kate Atkinson (Black Swan)	£5.99	3 9
3	TRAINSPOTTING Irvine Welsh (Minerva)	£6.99	2 39
4	THE RAINMAKER John Grisham (Arrow)	£5.99	4 7
5	OUR GAME John le Carré (Coronet)	£5.99	0 1
6	LADDER OF YEARS Anne Tyler (Vintage)	£5.99	5 6
7	RUTHLESS NEED Catherine Cookson (Corgi)	£5.99	10 2
8	MARABOU STORK NIGHTMARES Irvine Welsh (Vintage)	£5.99	9 7
9	SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS David Guterson (Bloomsbury)	£5.99	6 26
10	SENSE AND SENSIBILITY Jane Austen (Penguin)	£1.99	0 1

Any book from this list can be ordered from Dillons Mail Order Tel: 0171 636 1571 Fax: 0171 580 7680 DILLONS

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"This is one of the most intelligent, original, stimulating, self-indulgent, perverse and irresistibly enjoyable books that I have ever had the delight of reviewing"

Philip Ziegler, *Daily Telegraph*

"A tour de force of vivid historical writing..."

It is astoundingly learned, and yet the learning is offered with verve, humour and an unflagging sense of delight"

Michael Ignatieff, *Independent on Sunday*

"Simon Schama is a giant, a great thinking-machine and a golden lyricist as well"

Brian Masters, *Mail on Sunday*

Out now in paperback

Fontana Press

Take care, it's a jungle out there

■ JAKE'S ESCAPE

By Robin Hanbury-Tenison
Red Fox, £2.99

THE FAMOUS explorer's first children's book, categorised here as "older fiction", has the effect of making anyone over the age of ten wonder how he or she would react to sudden danger. Kidnapped by Shining Path terrorists while on holiday in Peru, 12-year-old Jake escapes with little more than a packet of boiled sweets. Because of Robin Hanbury-Tenison's deftly injected knowledge of the dark, car-pierced forests, Jake's survival through terrifying adventures — from a close encounter with red piranha fish to maggots in the feet — seems perfectly possible. But the inspirational quality of this thrilling story is in the blending of a mysterious magic world with the development of a sympathetic character.

■ HAS ANYONE SEEN THIS GIRL?

By Jean Ure
Bodley Head, £8.99

THE TITLE refers to a newspaper headline, next to which is a truly horrible photograph of 14-year-old Rachel, looking, according to her former classmate, "like a startled parrot". The school misfit, Rachel has disappeared in contradictory circumstances. Could the awkward, ungracious girl really have a glamorous admirer? In this modern boarding-school story Jean Ure relates in fascinating detail the whole appalling epic of Rachel's disappearance, uncovering deeper reasons for her social isolation. Ure's canny enlightenment never flags.

■ JACQUELINE HYDE

By Robert Swindells
Doubleday, £9.99

HALF-WAY through this book, I wondered how Robert Swindells was going to rescue his heroine. I did not realise that, stuck with the Jekyll and Hyde formula, he intended to leave her to her fate. At home, Jacqueline plays the good girl, running errands for pensioners and tidying up her room. Then she discovers what seems to be a bottle of old smelling salts in her granny's



Swindells: no rescue

attic. One sniff and she goes wild, flooding a public loo, smashing up a greenhouse and reciting rude verses at the school concert. She has become Jacqueline Bad. The trouble is that, good or bad, Jacqueline is equally nauseating. As to what is in the bottle — glue, drugs or whatever — Swindells is not saying. Thirteen-year-olds may conclude that she is fated for youth custody mainly because she has "sugar all to do".

MAUREEN OWEN

BOOKS

11

NEW IN PAPERBACK



Simon Schama: unafraid of a broad historical canvas

LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY
By Simon Schama
HarperCollins, £16.99

LANDSCAPES, according to Schama, "are culture before they are nature". This historian has never flinched from a broad canvas, and here takes on the task of exploring the assumptions that influence our perception of the natural world.

Schama argues that even landscapes, supposedly untouched by human hand are in fact constructs: for Schama, "framing" a wilderness as a National Park makes it to some extent just as artificial as a landscape caught in a "Claude glass".

a mirrored device, popular in the 18th century, used to aid the transformation of ordinary scenes into painterly visions.

Schama proceeds anecdotally, considering the significance attached — mainly in the West — to wood, water and rock. He introduces us to Claude Denecourt, who devised the first nature trails at Fontainebleau; to Gustav Borglum, who stamped his ideal of the American presidency on Mount Rushmore; and to modern artists like Andy Goldsworthy. Schama's boundless intellectual energy and confidence made this one of the most exciting books of 1995.

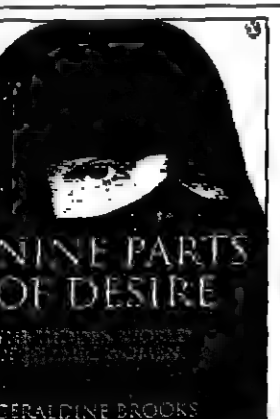


AN INTERFERENCE OF LIGHT
By Russell Celyn Jones
Penguin, £6.99

CELYN JONES travels deep into the heart of Welsh mountain life in the late 1930s. A young American private investigator is charged with discovering the secrets of the quarrymen; he becomes instead their elegist. This is a haunting work, a fine match for the troubled spirit of the times.

THESE SAME LONG BONES
By Gwendolyn M. Parker
Penguin, £6.99

IT IS 1947 and in the North Carolina town of Durham



NINE PARTS OF DESIRE
By Geraldine Brooks
Penguin, £7.99

AS A Middle East correspondent, Brooks found many stories were out of bounds to a woman. But when her stiletto-heeled PA switched to the black garb of fundamentalism, Brooks realised that the world of Muslim women was waiting to be investigated. The resulting book ranges from genital mutilation to women in fatigues. If the findings are alarming, the fine prose is quietly pointed: Muhammad himself condemned sex without foreplay as cruelty to women. Fascinating.

Contributors: Erica Wagner, Alison Burns, Lucy Lethbridge, Kate Bassett, Fiona Hook

the prosperous black community are grieving over the death of 11-year-old Mattie. In a lovingly detailed patchwork of memories and observations, Parker tells the stories of the members of the community. Parker's prose is precise and she effectively sets the novel's sense of the fragility and brevity of human life against the solid faith, work and traditions of a community bound by loyalty and common heritage. This is a novel that lingers in the imagination.

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP
By Robyn Sisman
Mandarin, £5.99

AN OXFORD undergrad is on the trail of his true father. He has discovered a snapshot of his mother, taken 20 years earlier, in the arms of an unrecognised old flame. Mater is put on the horns of a dilemma. In America, a presidential candidate hailed as Kennedy reincarnated finds that his past has got hold of his phone number and his career is on the line. Sisman has fictionalised her alleged affair with Clinton; unfortunately this romantic thriller is littered with clichés.



DEAD MAN WALKING
By Helen Prejean
HarperCollins, £5.99

HELEN PREJEAN was a Roman Catholic nun working with the New Orleans poor when she was asked to write to, then meet, a prisoner on Louisiana's Death Row. Although she abhors his crime, the rape and brutal murder of two strangers, she befriends this man, then another. Witnessing their executions convinces her that the death penalty is morally unjustifiable. Reasoned, compassionate and above all sensible, this book convinced me. It got a Pulitzer Prize nomination. It should have won.

Beating about the Bushmen

Justin Cartwright on a Swifteen satire of our colonial legacy

"BY WHAT I have gathered from your own relation, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

Christopher Hope has taken Jonathan Swift's lines, and played out a wonderful and extended joke with them. The Bushmen of South Africa were once treated as vermin. A bounty of £1 was placed on their heads and they were hunted virtually to extinction.

DARKEST ENGLAND
By Christopher Hope
Macmillan, £15.99

help. Booi runs into every known form of English double-speak, hypocrisy and delusion, and quite a few more.

When poor Mungo Booi is detained by immigration officers, he tries heroically to recognise the fabled qualities of the benighted English. Eventually he is released into the care of an unfrocked bishop and his capacious daughter. From there, he is more or less kidnapped by a dotty nobleman, whose harem are fascinated by the condition known in anthropological circles as semi-priapism. There is no plot to speak of but a series of outrageous incidents, including, in homage to Swift, some business with an ostrich.

What lends this novel distinction is Hope's deft touch in his inversion of the rules and in his understanding of the self-serving nature of Western beliefs. Underneath the knockabout and the dark observation of English society lies a deep and humane interest in the fate of the lost people.

This book carries a big stick, cloaked in laughter.

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A vanished Ireland recalled in photographs from 1954



Hitting a festive note: the Duane brothers of Limerick strike up at a hurling match — one of the many striking images in Dorothea Lange's Ireland (Aurum Press, £19.95)

Love ages on the Vine

Marcel Berlins finds a breathtaking imagination at work in a mature vintage

THE BRIMSTONE WEDDING
By Barbara Vine
Viking, £16

IT OPENS with a haunting sentence, repeated with variations, throughout the book: "The clothes of the dead won't wear long. They live for the person who owned them." In *Vineyard*, of course, this is not a mere passing reference to inherited garments. The *Brimstone Wedding* is about substituted lives; its characters are sad women who try for happiness by using emotions — and houses and husbands — that belong to others.

Stella Newland is dying of lung cancer at Middleton Hall, a residential home in Norfolk for the comfortably off elderly. Genevieve Warner, her solid, unimaginative, superstitious "care assistant", becomes her unlikely friend and confidante, the holder of secrets the old woman has never revealed, even to her own children.

Slowly, through the two narrators Stella and Genevieve, the events of the past unravel, complemented by Genevieve's own emotional torment. After 13 years, of marriage to her boring dependable spouse, she has fallen for a rakish television producer, a newcomer to the village. The modern lovers hold their illicit meetings in Stella's house and bed — the very scenes of the dying woman's unfolding confessions of passion, deception and fear 30 years before. Past and present touch each other in other ways, too: a ploughing farmer evokes strange memories; Genevieve watches on television the old

films of the once famous, now obscure actress Gilda Brent, a crucial player in Stella's drama.

The graceful, meandering, leisurely pace of the novel as Stella approaches a dignified death masks brilliantly the explosive revelations to come.

To say that the pieces of the jigsaw suddenly fall into place suggests a mechanical process in which scattered clues come together in some sort of neat resolution. *Vine* is far subtler than that. The story, beautifully written, emerges delicately, yet with shocking, ironic force and breathtaking imagination, as the unlikely parallel paths of the haughty old woman and her pedestrian companion finally unite. The last sentence, like the first, ends with a provocative thought on the clothes of the dead.

BOOK NEWS

NCR's prize shortlist

GITTA SERENY'S *Albert Speer* and Simon Shama's *Landscape and Memory* are among a dozen titles on the long shortlist for this year's £25,000 NCR Book Award for Non-Fiction. Shama won the £10,000 W. H. Smith Literary Award only last week.

Announcing the list, Jeremy Paxman, the chairman of the judges, said: "We have chosen an exciting cross-section of British non-fiction. Picking only one will be a nightmare. Picking even a dozen was no easy task: they had a record 146 submissions."

The prize, previously known as the AT&T, is reverting to its old name: the sponsor, the business computing company, has changed its own name back to the NCR Corporation.

The other shortlisted titles are *Verd Britain: A Life* by Paul Berry and Mark Bostridge; *Francis Drake* by John Cummins; *Millennium: A History of Our Last Thousand Years* by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto; *Makawa: A White Boy in Africa* by Peter Godwin; *Gladstone* by Roy Jenkins; *The Railway Man* by Eric Lomax; *Byzantium* by John Julius Norwich; *Accountable to None* by Simon Jenkins; *Dear Dad* by Valerie Grove; and *Rebel Hearts* by Kevin Toolis.

Paxman oversees an adjudicating panel that includes the bookseller Sue Butterworth, the author Nick Hornby, the journalist Cristina Odone and the historical biographer and author Andrew Roberts.

AFTER the Penguin 60s, another smart new marketing tactic from Penguin — Stephen King's new thriller, *The Green Mile*, is being published in six monthly instalments, at £1.99 each, starting next week, and he has still not finished writing it.

YOU won't get to the White House or Downing Street as a successful author but you will certainly be able to afford suites at the Savoy or the Pierre, to judge from two surveys this week.

Only two authors — Germaine Greer, at No 36, and Helen Gurley Brown, at No 72 — made *The Times* Magazine's list of the world's most powerful women, which concludes with the top 25 today.

Yet 22 authors made *The Mail on Sunday's* survey of Britain's top-earning women, with Barbara Taylor Bradford (reputedly earning £19.7 million) on top and Rosamunde Pilcher (fourth with £3.9 million), Delia Smith (sixth at £3.4 million) and Ruth Rendell (tenth at £2.9 million).

Authors on the rise were crime novelist Minette Walters (fortieth on £735,000) and romantic writer Josephine Cox (sixty-first at £441,000). There were 31 businesswomen.

FERGAL KEANE'S Season of Blood, a moving account of the Rwandan massacre which he reported for the BBC, has won the Orwell Prize for the best political book of 1995.

EVER wondered how to make a million out of your first novel? Two young Americans who have done just that are starting a whistle-stop tour of Britain next week, handing out free advice and instant criticism. Chuck Hogan and Craig Holden, authors of *The Standoff* and *The River Sorrow*, will be visiting bookshops in London, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester and Southampton. At Dillons, Trafalgar Square, on Monday, they will be offering instant value judgments on prospective authors' first chapters. There is a cash first prize of £100. Only £999,900 more to go and you are in the club.

Two manuals to launch a blockbusting writing career

How to sell a million

THE WRITER'S COMPANION
By Barry Turner
Macmillan, £12.99

BESTSELLER
By Celia Brayfield
Fourth Estate, £7.99



Brayfield: fascinating

JOHN GRISHAM allegedly earns more than a minor European country. Catherine Cookson's sales worldwide hover at a mere 100 million. Fruits of the gift and tears in the small hours, riches and fame are there for the taking for the popular writer, offering comfort against the sneers of the literati and the notion embedded in the collective ether that if something sells it cannot be good. After all, being cut to the quick in a penthouse is more comfortable than in a freezing basement.

Not that either Celia Brayfield or Barry Turner imagines that their books will persuade the literary establishment down from its lofty and, by comparison, impoverished pinnacle. They are after results, even if, on examination, the divide is less profound than imagined. Brayfield defines a fiction bestseller as one that sells 100,000 or more, which leaves literary luminaries such as Roddy Doyle and A. S. Byatt ricocheting between camps, a paradox neatly summed up by P. D. James when she described Jane Austen as "Mills & Boon with genius".

Although I take issue with the old chestnut that "a synopsis and sample chapter are all that is needed for a publisher to make a judgement", which is akin to being shown the storyboards at a film pre-

contracts, tax, libel, proofreading, copyright and hooking an agent. His gift is to make these boring bits palatable.

Much more ambitious and fascinating, Brayfield tackles the Zen of fiction bestsellerdom. Her premise that stories define a puzzling world and help to defuse our more primitive fears, the most significant continuing to haunt and nourish our imaginations, is based on a study of how myth works through cultures. From there she constructs her methods of story shaping, research, narrative techniques and, of course, style. The less spatially minded might recoil from the mind maps and charts but few will disagree with the stern but excellent advice on dealing with inhibiting fears, family intrusions, the urge to stuff chocolate and the knockabout trauma of being published.

No writer should permit the rebel and risk-taker to be beaten out of them. Rules should be broken occasionally, and the responsibility to write living, breathing novels capable of making us laugh, weep and marvel rests with the author. Nevertheless, from the GCSE student upwards, writers and readers will enjoy this bold and illuminating tilt at unravelling the mysteries of the popular novel. Even, perhaps, the literary novelist.

ELIZABETH BUCHAN

A used husband is no bargain

SECOND WIVES
By Cindy Blake
Simon & Schuster, £15.99

WHEN the four Preston sisters are still young children, their mother accidentally runs over their baby brother, Steven, and kills him. Racked with guilt, she goes nuts, withdraws from the family, leaves Boston for London with her local gardening group, and dies there.

Naturally, Mrs Preston leaves her daughters a legacy of emotional dysfunction. With a withdrawn father who fishes and womanises in almost equal measure, the Preston sisters have to fend for themselves in life and love, which they do with rather unhappy consequences.

Underconfident Meg marries a divorced, griggish academic, and inherits not only his awful sons but weekend casseroles from their drippy mother. Capable Amy marries firstly a dissolute hippy who leaves her holding the baby, and secondly a man with a daughter from a first marriage to his zany childhood sweetheart. Acerbic Beth shuns commitment altogether, preferring casual sex and whisky. And sweet Leonora (there is, incidentally, no explanation as to why she is the only sister not named after one of Louis M. Alcott's *Little Women*) falls in love with a

man still married to a woman who wears electric blue and has murderous tendencies.

If *Second Wives* sounds laughable, it is because it is meant to be. Cindy Blake is a gifted comic writer, and *Second Wives* is an energetic and spirited comic novel. It is melodramatic and over-sentimental, yes, but it is also enormous fun, and what sets it apart from many of its sibling blockbusters is Blake's intelligent and razor-sharp wit.

She has a good ear for quick-fire dialogue (one or two of the sparkiest exchanges put me in mind of scripts by the great Nora Ephron) and groovy, grouchy Beth is a wonderful creation: her ceaseless one-liners are not only wildly funny but a good antidote to schmaltzy statements such as, "Love means never looking over the guy's shoulder for someone more interesting on the horizon", which should really be left out of all books, at all costs.

Great fun, but a word of advice for prospective second wives: it is not a manual.

MARY LOUDON

Alan Brown
AUDREY HEPBURN'S NECK

'A wonderful novel'

THE TIMES

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Rustic rules for new recruits

A black and white photograph of a vintage wooden chest of drawers. The chest has a decorative metal handle on the left side and a small metal container on top. The chest is positioned on a patterned rug.

or woman look without stalking or skinning anything. Barbour does them. (Approx £58, 0191-455 4444 for local stockists).

Finally, as your new life as a countrified downshifter moves at a leisurely pace, you should have a sundial. There are lots of shiny ones to be found, but Past Times has a Victorian-style one in brass, ready antiqued (7in diameter, £19.95 complete with fixing screws, 01993 770440) which saves you having to muddy it up yourself.

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COLLECTING

Prize catches for the complete angler



Valued hauls for the collectors of angling ephemera

A treasure trove of rods, reels and creels tells the story of fishing from the 1700s to the present day

As part from maggots, antique fishing tackle covers almost anything: rods, reels, creels, anglers' knives, eyed flies and cased fish. John Stephenson, an angler, became so hooked by the collecting bug that he left his job as sales director of Kwik-Fit six years ago to set up The Tackle Exchange at Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, dealing in new and vintage fishing tackle.

Angling has been his passion from the age of seven, when his elder brother took him lake-fishing in Perthshire. But now, landing a silver reel at auction is as thrilling as lifting a prize barbel from the nearby River Dove.

More than 100 reels sit on Mr Stephenson's shelves and he has another display behind his shop, regularly topped up with angling ephemera, landing-nets, gaffs and fly-boxes. Even lures, designed as throw-aways but now worth up to £70, lead weights and hooks send ripples in the market. Mr Stephenson started his

collection by chance: "I was roach-fishing in a canal when I saw an old chap nearby who was distressed because the eye had fallen off his split-canoe rod. I fixed it for him and, in return, he offered me an intriguing wooden rod."

Mr Stephenson's walls are lined with cased fish, including carp, rudd and trout, which lie entombed in glass boxes amid gravel and reed. Cased fish are popular collectables. A 3oz gudgeon from the 1940s sold recently at auction for £5,000. "A gudgeon is a good find, as it's rare to stuff such a tiny fish," he says.

One case contains a brace of sea trout — one a 17-pounder caught, as the inscription reads, "by N.B. Spurrey of Leicester, 1932". The angler was a record-holder in his day. "A collector offered me the case, and a second one, for £500," Mr Stephenson says. "and I had to have them. I drove to Walsall, got lost, and so did the collector. In the end, we agreed to meet at a

motorway roundabout. It was worth all the hassle."

The original taxidermist's labels hang inside the case, along with the flies that ensnared the fish.

For anyone thinking of starting a collection, Mr Stephenson recommends Nottingham reels, which are relatively easy to find. Originally made in Nottingham in the 1830s, these wooden, 3-in beauties were used for float and coarse fishing.

In years gone by, all reels were handmade and expensive. "Reelmakers were also clockmakers, skilled in filing pins and making grooves, and used to working in brass. Reels were often custom-engraved," Mr Stephenson says. In the 1930s a reel would cost the equivalent of six weeks' wages for a working man; in the 19th century it cost a year's pay.

Part of his fascination with antique tackle is seeing how different fishing once was: "A hundred years ago you'd soak



John Stephenson with antique kit

the gut, dig for worms and other bait, and cycle to your destination. Later you would clean the tackle, hang the lines to dry, and rewind them." With today's hi-tech gear, this process is mostly eliminated, though sometimes Mr Ste-

phenson uses vintage tackle. Mr Stephenson calls himself a "fanatical fisherman and collector". He thinks most vintage tackle collectors are avid fishermen; and even anglers who are not collectors hoard things that might be

Fact file

□ The Tackle Exchange, John Stephenson, 95b Trent Road, Dresden, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 4EG (01782 599888).

□ Auctioneers: Angling Auctions, Princess Louise's Regimental Headquarters, 190 Flammersmith Road, London W6 (0181 749 4175). Nock Deighton: Tasley, Bridgworth, Shropshire (01746 762666). Christie's Glasgow, 164 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4TB (0141 332 8134).

□ Reading: *The Antique Tackle Observer*, PO Box 93, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 0VZ (01509 85212); annual subscription £75. *Fishing Reels — Collecting for All*, by Phil Waller (Ed.), PO Box 108, Sutton, Surrey SM4 1TD. *Understanding Threadlines: A Collector's Guide to the early Fly-Spool Fishing Reels (E20) and Rosewood to Revolution: a history of the wooden reel and centre-pin (E29)*, both by John Stephenson, from The Tackle Exchange.



Reels display

items that look like wine-making equipment. One odd-looking device from 1750 is known as a "pinn", used in Scotland for harling (trawling a set of lines). A 1750s leather creel resembles a gourd. An iron winch has its original black and white horsehair line. Tackle manufacturing took off in the 1700s. Now, as collecting becomes more popular, prices are increasing. A late 19th-century 4in aerial reel, made of ebony with an intricate spoke drum spinning like a gyroscope, cost £200 two years ago and would now fetch £500. Hardy is a brand name to look for: established in 1872, it threw its lines across the British Empire.

Hooks and their original packets, from the 1840s, cost just a few pounds today, as do the gut-eyed flies, which look like colourful wisps. But for Mr Stephenson nothing beats the thrill of fishing: "Not long ago I caught my first 20lb pike," he says proudly.

JOSEPH WILLIAMS

SALERDOM

□ GROWN-UP can relieve their childhood today in Ilkley, Yorkshire, where the Andrew Hartle antique toy auction includes a rare Meccano No 10 set (estimate £600-£800), dolls and a large rocking horse. Prices start at around £30.

□ CAST-OFFS from the family seat of the marquesses of Bute, Mount Stuart House, are being sold in Glasgow by Christie's Scotland on Monday. The 340 items range from a massive Japanese bronze urn at £10,000-£15,000 to a colourful painting of wild fowl on the coast by Edwardian painter Archibald Thorburn at £10,000-£15,000.

□ A FLOCK of stoneware birds by 19th-century makers the Martin Brothers will be chased by collectors at Phillips London applied arts sale on Tuesday (700-£3,000). Art glass by Gallé, Daum and others ranges from about £300-£3,000.

□ A SALE is devoted to dogs and cats at Christie's on Thursday. Assessed by Count Alarico Blinieri, this collection ranges from sentimental oil portraits such as Susan, an Old English Terrier by 19th-century artist Alfred E. de Piles (£1,800-£2,500) to walking sticks with dog's head handles (£150 to £400). A grand neo-classical kennel complex with green-buttoned cushions for the top dog is expected to fetch from £3,000-£5,000.

□ TIEPINS mice a comeback on Thursday when about 60 of them come up at Sotheby's jewel sale. One topped with a gold Brazilian beetle is estimated at about £250-£300.

SARAH JANE CHICKLAND

Andrew Hartle Fine Art, Victoria Rd, Little Lane, Ilkley, W. Yorks (01943 816303); Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 (0171 839 9104); Christie's Scotland, 164 Bath Street, Glasgow (0141 332 8134); Phillips, 101 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171 639 6600); Sotheby's, 34 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171 493 8080).

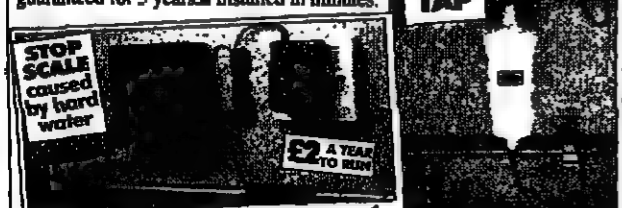
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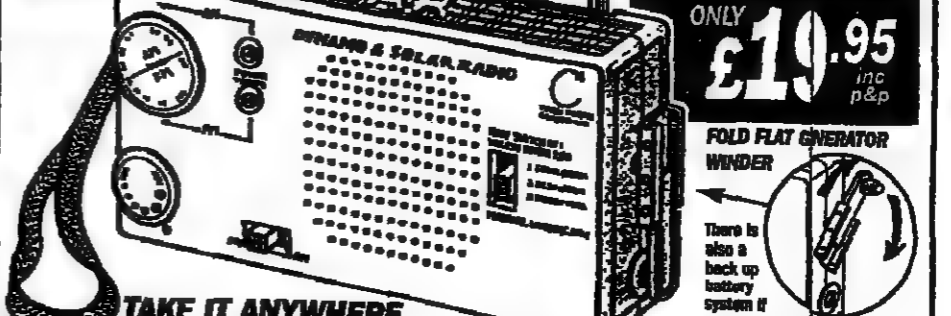
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Burma's tourist dilemma

Is it right to take a holiday in a country run by a despotic junta? Yes, says Peter Hughes

Tragedy and comedy wear the same masks in the benighted nation of Burma. If there is a twinkle in the eyes, the mouth grieves; if there is a smile on the lips, the eyes shed tears. It is a country that has been plundered, morally and economically, by the demented General Ne Win, who seized power in 1962. Although he stood down from the presidency 14 years ago, he has continued to pull the strings of the junta from behind the gun emplacements of his villa on the outskirts of the capital, Yangon (formerly Rangoon).

Ne Win is a lunatic in the astrological sense of the word, a man so superstitious that when an astrologer told him that right was better than left, he instantly ordered the nation's traffic to move from the left to the right side of the road. In homage to his lucky number, nine, he summarily replaced 50 and 100 kyat notes with denominations of 45 and 90. No warning was given nor compensation paid to those with savings in the old money.

The country is governed by the State Law and Order Restoration Council, SLORC for short, an acronym that could have been drawn from a lexicon of preposterous names for ruthless dictatorships. In 1990, to universal surprise, democratic elections were held. To the surprise of no one, except the regime, the main opposition party, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, swept the board with a three-to-one majority. So shocked was the Government that it disregarded the result and placed Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and was released last year.

Such caprices might almost be comic were they not accompanied by brutality. Recently, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights published a catalogue of abuses — torture, executions, forced labour, rape, politically motivated arrests and detention.

Economically Burma, or Myanmar as it wishes to be known, is slumped in the middle of the UN's list of the ten poorest countries. And this is a nation, rich in minerals, which once grew enough rice to supply its neighbours.



Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, says tourists should stay away from Burma until democracy reigns

On another whim, because they do not have the infrastructure to support it, the generals have declared 1996 to be "Visit Myanmar Year". The question is, should anyone visit such a country?

Tourism Concern, an organisation set up to prod the conscience of anyone who ignores the damage tourism can do, says no. Tricia Barnett, the director, claims tourism itself is contributing to the ill-treatment of the Burmese people. "Tourism development in Burma is associated with gross human rights abuse, such as displacement and forced labour," she quotes Aung San Suu Kyi's call for a halt to investment and for tourists to stay away until democracy is restored.

In the past 12 months I have made

two visits to Burma, one last month for *The Times*. Presumptuous though it may be to dispute the views of a Nobel Prize winner, I nevertheless believe that as many people as possible should visit the country.

So do the teacher and lawyer I met in Mandalay. The worst times, they told me, were during the years when the generals themselves were deterring tourism by restricting visas. Then, when the country was isolated, the people felt forgotten.

Travel is not simply an economic commodity; some of the worst excesses of tourism have occurred because people have been allowed to think that

it is. Still less is it a truncheon with which to rap the knuckles of the regimes we disapprove of, however detestable. Tourism, which ran uninterrupted to Eastern Europe in the 1970s, no more prolonged Soviet communism than it hastened the end of apartheid in South Africa or prevented the massacre in Tiananmen Square.

Tourism is about people as much as it is about politics or the balance of payments; it is one of our freedoms, both mine and the men's I met in Mandalay. To stay away from a country on principle may make you feel better but it may well make the people living there feel worse.

● The author was Editor of *ITV's* *Wish You Were Here*... for 20 years.

Holiday happenings from around the world

Hotel with fizz and fantasy



COMING SOON: a 16-page, feature-packed, passport to Australia supplement for tourists, travellers and backpackers will be published with *The Times* next Friday

(01293 822244) in its winter 1996/97 programme. Both states have superb beaches. A fortnight's two-centre B&B holiday, including flights, starts at £814. A week in Goa starts from £394 per person or from £567 for 14 nights in Kerala.

BALTIC PASS
THE new Baltic air pass, one of the first from former Iron Curtain countries, is available to people booking tours using the

Legoland clicks into action

BRITAIN's new Legoland opens next Friday — and you'll be turned away when the park reaches its 12,000 capacity, no matter how far you've travelled. So it's best to book in advance.

The 150-acre site, on the Windsor to Bracknell road, Berkshire, has 17 rides, from a traditional carousel and ferris wheel to self-drive children's cars and a canoe ride which climaxes with a plunge down a frame. Other attractions (21 in all) include a politically correct circus (no animals), magic theatre, gold-panning area, puppet theatre and a cathedral to Lego, where firms can build dinosaurs, houses, cars and people. A Lego version of Tower Bridge, using 100,000 pieces, took 500 man hours to build.

● Legoland opening times, 10am-6pm daily (8pm July and August). Closes on September 25 for winter. Prebook on 0990 626364; adults £14, children £11. On the gate prices: £15, children £12

Air Baltic Garwick-Riga flight. This enables them to fly between Riga, Helsinki, Vilnius and Tallin, for £29 a sector. Visas not required by British passport holders. Tours and passes can be booked from Regent Holidays, 0171-921 1711.

TRJAN TREASURE
A TOUR to examine Trojan treasures smuggled out of Turkey at the end of the last century and discovered in Moscow in 1993, is being offered by Martin Randall Travel (0181-742 3355). The week's tour, in October, takes in Moscow's Pushkin Museum, Istanbul's archaeological museum, the Trojan site and harbour, and Gallipoli. The cost is £1,795 half board, including return flights.

FRENCH LEAVE
SELF-CATERING Motorail packages in France are offered by Eurovillages (01606 734400) at reduced prices in May. A family of two adults and two children under 11, heading for the Club Merigoutin in the Dordogne will pay a total of £638 for seven days' chalet accommodation, including the Dover-Calais crossing. Motorail to Brive with couchette, and return. The same family heading for the Côte d'Azur and taking the Calais/Avignon Motorail would pay £916, with a week's stay at Latitudes Holiday Village at Les Issambres.

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SKIING: In his last ski report until next season, Doug Sager explains how to keep up with the snow news

Snowstorms in cyberspace

Much has been made of "surfing the Net". Now skiers and snowboarders too have good reason to slide around the Internet. They can save money and book later for a better chance of good snow conditions. More information is available more instantly than ever before. But electronic access is no guarantee of accuracy.

"Within hours of the first snowflakes falling in the Alps, our phones were ringing off the hooks," says Susi Johnston of Alpine Answers, referring to the big storms in mid-February which saved this snow-starved season. And Ms Johnston is just one of many ski industry professionals to report an extraordinary sensitivity to snow reports this winter.

"People are becoming amazingly adept at balancing snow depths with the rise and fall of package prices," says Ms Johnston. Analysts at mainstream operators Crystal and Neilson agree. This has been the season of late bookers.

Skiers realise they can save hundreds of pounds playing the waiting game. But to win, they have to be experts at information technology.

The tour operators are anxious not to tout their cut-price deals too openly, neither wanting to antagonise the early bookers who paid full brochure prices nor to encourage the mass of the market to lie in wait too long, withholding deposits.

Often, special deals are brokered through specialist agencies only, such as Alpine Answers, which collates offers from scores of operators, or advertised only at the last minute. "The coming medium for late offers is the Internet," Ms Johnston says.

So far it is not tour operators hawking holidays but ski re-

sorts, manufacturers of ski and snowboarding gear and the tourist offices of the Alpine countries, apart from Italy, which have taken enthusiastically to the Internet.

Access to accurate information on snow conditions is the secret of successful late banking, since rock-bottom offers are often a byword for brown pistes. Getting first news of major snowstorms means being able to book before prices rise to reflect deeper snow.

But when it comes to snow reports, who do you trust? Blackcomb Mountain at Whistler, Canada, has the ultimate Internet answer. It is installing cameras on the slopes for live online video feeds. Mammoth Mountain in California, one of the most wired ski resorts in the world with three Internet sites, already has one web page dedicated to slope-side images from its "weather cam".

In theory the Internet promises the most immediate access to accurate snow reports. Cross-checking claims made by a tour operator with a resort or national tourist office should provide some protection.

At the end of the day, however, data is only as reliable as its source. Snow reports and other resort claims advertised on the sites of Swiss, Austrian and French national tourist organisations are input exactly as tourist directors send them in.

I have seen more than one tourist director send snow reports back to be "done again" by ski holiday reps, who depend on the goodwill of resort directors for free rooms, board and lift passes. Chalet company staff are equally motivated to take optimistic views.

The Internet promises no reprieve from the basic principle of computing — garbage

in, garbage out. Already some compilers of snow report pages for national tourist offices are beginning to complain privately about "unrealistic" snow depths on the Internet pages of certain resorts in the Alps.

Live pictures from the slopes are one way to solve the problem. But it is more the variety of services and their immediate access than the accuracy of snow reporting that the Internet excels at. An Internet skier can dial up a resort to book a ski lesson, pass or hotel room, zoom into runs on a piste map and check restaurant menus.

America is leading the way when it comes to Internet bookings. The National Ski Areas Association there reports that 11 per cent of its member resorts can handle credit card transactions for accommodation and other services. European resorts lag far behind.

In North America, resorts have set up competing pages on the World Wide Web. Entertainment in the form of multi-media video and music clips shows skiers and snowboarders flying through the powder in full colour. But these images can be time-consuming for owners of older computers with modems slower than 28,800 bps.

Switzerland, France and Austria have taken a more nationalistic approach, including individual resorts in massive sites of thousands of pages dealing with general tourism.

Skiers can already take tours of the pistes online. Soon they will be able to take virtual tours of chalet accommodation. But for the moment using the Internet requires a great deal of patience, waiting for images to appear on screen and searching through hundreds of pages for a pay-off.



Electronic access to snow reports helps skiers to choose their destinations more carefully

SKIING THE INTERNET

❑ Skiing articles in *The Times* are available from the on-line version of this newspaper, with live hyperlinks to the addresses (URLs) below. Because of the nature of the Internet, site addresses and contents may change without notice. The online *Times* can be found at <http://www.the-times.co.uk>

❑ Weather and snow reports: <http://www.anorak.co.uk> — snow reports from the Ski Club of Great Britain.

❑ Detailed satellite weather maps of US: <http://www.nova.edu/Inter-Links/misc/satellite.html>

❑ The Alps: <http://www.austria-info.at> — 2,100 pages of tourist information on Austria, with maps and snow reports.

❑ <http://www.skifrance.fr> — 1400 pages on ski holidays in France, including snow and weather reports and accommodation in English and French.

❑ <http://www.fr-holidaystore.co.uk> — the Association of British Tour Operators to France offers 500 pages of summer and winter holiday details, with 25 pages devoted to skiing packages.

❑ <http://www.switzerlandtourism.ch> — general tourist information with full details of accommodation, ski schools and snow reports.

❑ <http://www.whistler.net/blackcomb/> — resorts in North America. This is one of the most advanced resort pages on the web. From Blackcomb Mountain at Whistler.

❑ <http://www.worldhost.com/skibanflakelouise> — central information depot for Lake Louise, Sunshine and Norway resorts in Canada.

❑ <http://www.rsn.com> — snow reports from 548 resorts in 43 American states.

❑ <http://s2.com/skiapen> — Aspen, Snowmass and Aspen Highlands information including flights and accommodation.

❑ <http://vail.net> — maps of the pistes and package offers direct from America's most popular resort.

❑ <http://www.jacksonhole.com/ski> — cowboy skiing on computer, images and information from Jackson Hole.

❑ Snowboarding: <http://www.access.ch/ist/> — headquarters of the International Snowboard Federation, latest competition results plus biographies of the world's best riders.

❑ Other resources: <http://www.snownet.com> — compendium of skiing gear, clothing, books, clubs and worldwide resort information.

❑ <http://www.travelbase.com/skiareas> — industry information from American ski resorts and manufacturers.

❑ SkiNet: <http://www.skinet.com> — on-line information from *Ski Magazine* and *Skiing Magazine* on how to ski better, where to go and what to buy.

On-screen guides

THE Internet is not the only computer-based source of skiing information. Resorts are starting to issue CD-Rom discs instead of press dossiers. Several computer guides to ski resorts have appeared, mostly in America. They all have user-friendly databases and video graphics no book can compete with.

Britain's first on-screen ski guide threatens to make the two best-selling books, *The Good Skiing Guide* and *Where to Ski*, obsolete. Travelbug Software (01932 224008) offers 190 ski resorts and package holiday prices from 30 tour operators, in full colour, at the

same price or less (£14.95) than its print competitors. The Travelbug will do what no book can — once you tell it your skiing ability and price range, it will inform you which tour operator's holiday and which resorts are ideal for you. It can even calculate extra costs such as ski school, lift passes and ski hire. No guidebook shows snow depths resort by resort, month by month. But Travelbug does that as well as providing a weekly index of tour operator prices for each resort.

What it lacks are detailed full-colour piste maps to replace the small and poorly printed ones in both best-selling British guidebooks.

Travellers to America should check out Media Odyssey's SKI-CD, a comprehensive travel planner to 450 ski areas in the USA. However, its 800 direct-dial numbers to specific resorts will not work from the UK. Unlike Travelbug, SKI-CD includes sound and video clips as well as piste maps and photographs. SKI-CD costs around £10 and is available from Modyssey@aol.com or by phoning 001 303 293 3037.

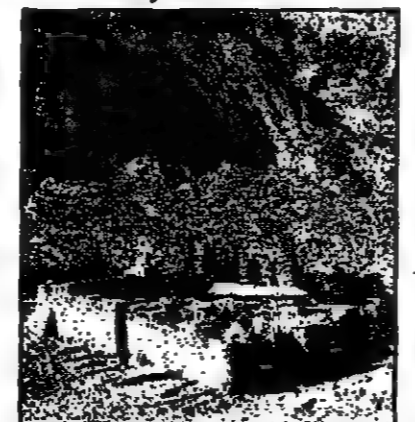
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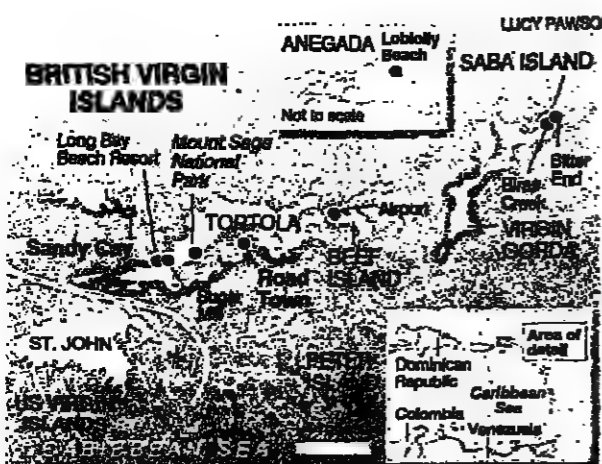
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BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS: The search for sun, solitude and life in slow motion ends on a tiny atoll

Sailing into a rich man's world



Balmey days: Cane Garden Bay, Tortola, the main island in the group, which is ideal for family groups and those who like a little entertainment

About halfway down the harbour front in Road Town, the capital of the British Virgin Islands, I found the sort of restaurant no resort should be without. This is the Cell Five Lounge, where a notice on the pavement offers the "Best Breakfast in the Caribbean", "Sumptuous Dinners", "Fantastic Drinks", "Great Lunches" and a "Steel Band" every Thursday.

This inmodest selection might pull in the crowds but the best bit comes at the bottom, where guests are warned: "Sorry, we do not cater for people in a hurry." At last, the place I have been looking for all my life... a slow food joint. Those who fancy a holiday where the pace of life is gentle need look no further.

The same might be said of the entire BVIs, an attractive litter of islands off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico — but you have to be selective. To stay on one island might not fill up the week, to dash about the lot would be to miss the whole point of the place. The best plan is to decide what you like doing and visit those islands best suited for that purpose.

The islands are perfect for honeymoons, sailing or just hanging about. That much is obvious on arrival. There is a great deal of swooning going on, the sea is carpeted with yachts and, when it comes to hanging about, the attractions of the BVIs are almost too numerous to mention. However, apart from the standard

Caribbean joys of blue seas and sunny skies, these islands offer something that is hard to find — solitude. On a BVI beach, two really is a crowd — and these beaches stretch for miles on every island, sandy and safe.

This marvellous absence of crowds is explained by the fact that most visitors either arrive by yacht, stay on a yacht or go yachting. Sailing is one of the main activities. I usually get queasy walking on wet grass but I found myself on the *Thalassi*, a 90ft schooner which comes complete with a crew in designer T-shirts, taking a day-sail around Tortola for lunch off Sandy Cay.

Another attraction is the food which, if not cheap, is always good and heavy on local seafood. If you like lobster, then dinner at the Sugar Mill hotel on Tortola or an alfresco lunch at the Big Bamboo beach cafe at Loblolly Beach on Anegada Island has to form part of the holiday.

Exploring the BVIs is fairly easy. Ferries, motor boats and light aircraft ply between the islands and travelling times are short — just half an hour by sea from Tortola to Virgin Gorda, a 12-minute hop from the Beef Island Airport to the most far-flung island, Anegada. Most of these side trips begin on Tortola, the main island of the group, home to the capital, Road Town, the Sage Mountain National Park — a good place to visit for hill walks and rare birds such as the pearl-eyed thrasher, which stubbornly

refused to appear — and hotels like the excellent Long Bay Beach Resort, the base for my two-day stay.

Tortola's other attractions include Bomba's Beach Bar, which keeps erratic hours, the Sugar Mill restaurant, a number of small, colourful yachting ports and the local specific, a rum-based drink known as a Painkiller. Tortola is ideal for family groups and younger people who need a bit of

nightlife, so a couple of days at Long Beach will do for Tortola before moving on to Peter Island.

Peter Island is a resort island and a haven of the jet set, with just one hotel, a few villas and many regular guests. A couple I met in the bar were on their 29th visit. There isn't a lot to do on Peter Island so I spent a day dozing on the beach, dining on lobster in the restaurant, taking dips

in the pool or exploring the potential of the beach bar, where the arrival of our small party doubled the daily takings. A few days doing nothing on Peter Island was beginning to feel like a very good idea when the *Thalassi* slid into the marina and took me off to Sandy Cay.

Sailing on a fully catered yacht for a day is a marvellous way to acquire a tan and discover how the rich live. If BVI yachtsmen are anything to go by, they live extremely well. As one retired millionaire remarked on Peter Island: "People who think that money can't buy happiness are shopping at the wrong store." This cruise displayed a good range of islands, green outcrops in a clear blue sea, and the following day took me to Guana.

Guana is a honey-moon island, very small, quiet and rather wonderful. It has one delightful hilltop hotel, seven empty beaches, flamingoes and pelicans, which plummet into the sea like broken umbrellas. Apart from walking, snorkelling and watching the pelicans, there is not a lot else to do but relax. Getting there from Tortola takes only ten minutes by speedboat but most people who go there never want to leave.

Island-hopping can become addictive. After a couple of

days on one island you want to move to another one, and everyone in the British Virgin Islands insists that visitors go to Anegada.

Anegada is a real coral atoll, flat, arid and typically empty, just three miles wide and only 27ft above sea level, a place for people who like to get away from it all. To get there usually requires a short flight from Tortola because Anegada is fringed with reefs which make sailing there tricky, although they make the snorkelling and bone-fishing superb. To get about you need a mountain bike. The island has splendid beach cafes serving freshly caught lobster, and just one fine hotel, the Anegada Reef Hotel, a centre for expeditions on and off-shore.

The last major island of the group is Virgin Gorda, which does not belong to Richard Branson: he owns Necker Island, a mile or two offshore. Virgin Gorda looks a bit like Cornwall and a bit like the Seychelles, with an old tin mine, lots of splendid beaches and big, smooth rocks. It also has two resorts that make any stay memorable — Biras Creek, a hotel on a hill which looks a bit like a castle, and the larger resort hotel of Bitter End, consisting of cabins set on a hillside above the marina and the central bar and restaurant. It also has easy access to the Pirates Pub on Saba Island, a few hundred yards

offshore, home to Feather, the dancing parrot, the centrepiece for some lively evenings.

The BVIs have all the holiday assets — sun, good food, turquoise seas, friendly people, empty beaches and no crime. Whether you want to sail, go there on honeymoon or just relax, the islands are hard to beat.

ROBIN NEILLANDS

Fact file

□ The author was a guest of Caribbeours (0171-581 3517). A week at Long Bay Resort on Tortola costs from £778 (extra days from £38) excluding meals. A week on Peter Island costs from £1,096, with extra days costing from £74, including flights and transfers but excluding meals. A week on Guana costs from £1,922, extra days from £192, including all meals. Caribbeours also offers holidays at Biras Creek and Bitter End on Virgin Gorda from £1,417 per person, including all meals, flights and transfers. Flights from Tortola to Anegada cost \$50 (£31) return. Further information from Caribbeours or the BVI Tourist Office (0171-240 4259).

□ A useful publication detailing BVI facilities and attractions is *The Welcome* magazine, available from all the main hotels and the BVI Tourist Office.

□ The BVIs have several National Parks, including the wreck of the steamer *Rhône*, the centre for a maritime park off Salt Island. Other parks include the Queen Elizabeth and Sage mountain parks on Tortola and the Diamond Cay and Great Tobago seabird sanctuaries. Scuba-diving and snorkelling are superb details from Dive BVI on Virgin Gorda or Peter Island, or the UK Tourist Office.

□ Car rental is available on the main islands from around \$25 (£15) a day. Drivers must be aged 25 or over and have a full UK driving licence. Driving is on the left with a 40mph speed limit. The US dollar is the accepted local currency. Air departure tax \$5 (£5).

□ The islands enjoy good weather throughout the year, with temperatures staying around 90F, with little humidity.

□ Getting around the BVIs is easy on a network of ferries and light aircraft. Full details from the BVI Tourist Office.

□ Dress ranges from shorts to "smart-casual", but topless bathing and walking in residential areas with bare chests or midriffs is discouraged.

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TRAVEL

19

PAKISTAN: Neither bandits nor falling boulders can dim the excitement of a magical mountain pilgrimage

Gorges glint with garnets

Strobes of lightning pierced the darkness, electrifying the mass of the Hindu Raj. The lamps flickered and died. Within seconds, the jovial manager of Chilas's finest hotel was at my side, bearing light and comfort. "This is nothing," he grinned, his face blue in the neon glow. "During the monsoons the guests were stuck here for a week."

Chilas is a rest stop along the Karakoram Highway — and not a place in which to linger. In the Kohistan region forbidding mountains offer sanctuary to all manner of bandits. Each village boasts a "killing tower", the better to take pot shots at enemies. It is used to be called Yaghistan — Land of the Ungoverned — and old habits die hard.

Cocooned by Iran, our guide, and Muzamal, our driver, we marvelled in safety at this primitive otherness. We were travelling northeast along the Karakoram Highway to the Khunjerab Pass in an air-conditioned minibus. Twenty years ago, the region was accessible only via perilous jeep tracks.

This stretch of the KKH opened in 1978: 685km of road blasted through the mountains of the Northern Areas of Pakistan at a cost of 800 lives (some sources claim 2,500). Centuries-old graffiti carved into the rocks from Gandharan Swat to China mark the progress of Buddhist pilgrims and merchants along this branch of the historic Silk Road.

Today, the journey is still difficult. Muzamal sped through an earthquake zone where the valley narrows to a sheer granite gorge and the Indus sluices 500m below. The view is breathtaking, if heart-stopping. Signs warn of landslides, and a little farther on the road has been potted by a



rockfall. The Sisyphean task of keeping the KKH in passable shape falls to the Frontier Works Organisation, which logs details of all foreigners braving this route. Naturally, there are no guard rails to thwart the will of Allah.

Then a miracle occurred. We rounded a bend and the claustrophobic pass yielded a spectacular panorama — the junction of the mighty Hindu Raj, Karakoram and Himalayan ranges spread like ramparts across the horizon.

Formerly a collection of princely states, the Northern Areas are in the limbo of dispute — claimed by Kashmir but administered by Islamabad. A babel of tongues can be heard in the tribal hotch-potch of the regional capital, Gilgit Town: Shia and Sunni Muslims gather here, with occasionally explosive results. Then, of course, there are the spies.

"Someone had better go with you," warned Iran when I announced a shopping trip to Gilgit. He was taking no chances. It seems the 19th-century obsession with spies lives on. A burly chapone was appointed and we set off through the metropolitan shanty of the Cinema Bazaar in search of carpets, jewellery and scarves.

I loved Gilgit, with its buzz of intrigue and romance. I loved the oh-so-un-British polo matches, virtuoso free-for-alls

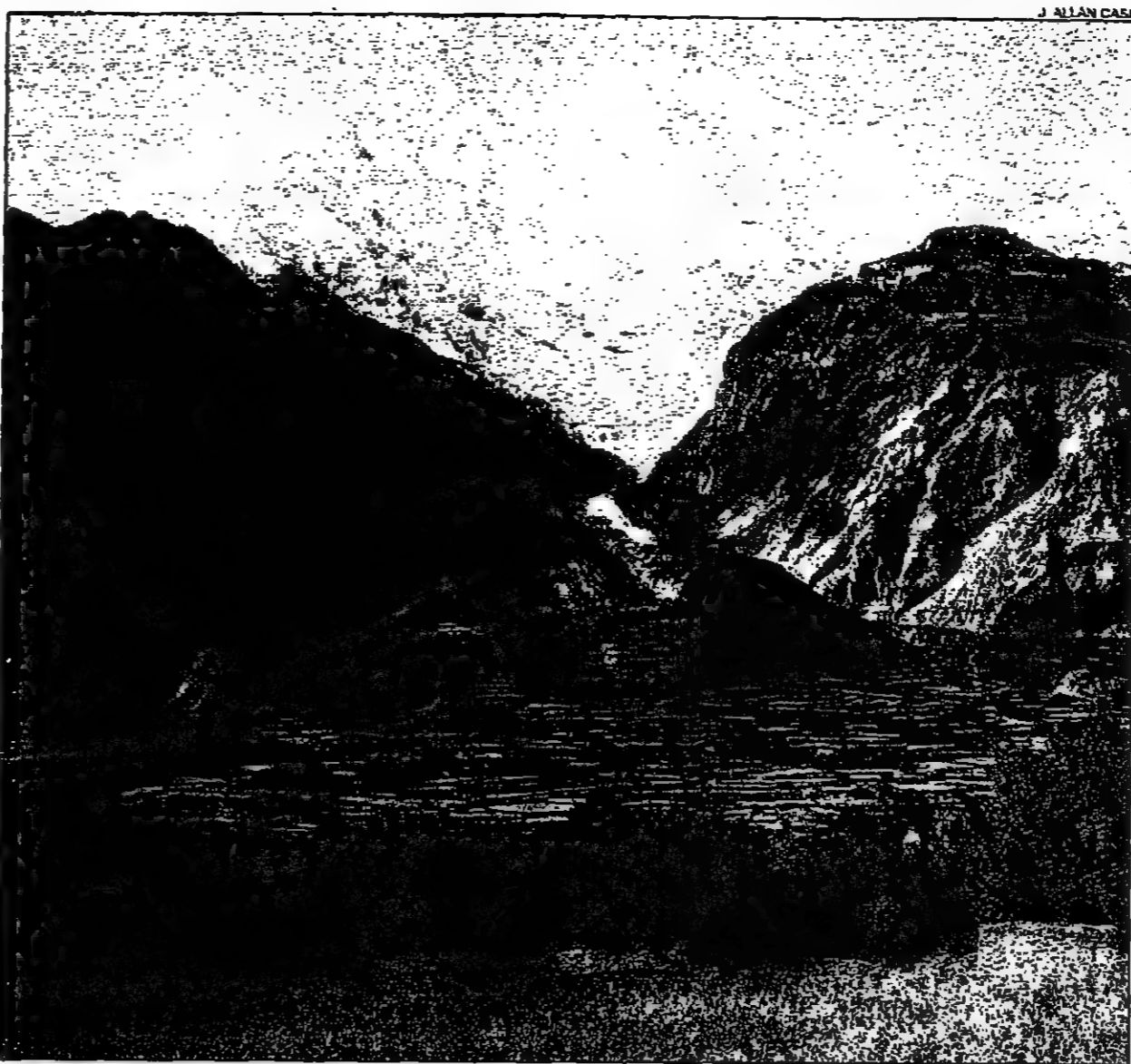
played on dusty ground to the accompaniment of pipes and drums. I even enjoyed the unforgettable drench-and-freeze experience of white-water rafting on the glacial Gilgit River, secure in the knowledge that warmth waited at the hotel.

We foraged on into the magical land of Hunza, stopping to gather garnets which rain down a mineral-studded seam of rock. Serrated mountains, eight of which soar above 7,000m, dominated the drive. We passed abandoned villages perched high on crumbling outcrops which time will plunge into oblivion. The capital, Karimabad, 10km above the highway, is accessible only by four-wheel drive.

Despite the Hunzakuts' legendary longevity — the result, apparently, of a daily diet of apricots and gold-rich water — I saw no old crones. Instead, I saw women for the first time in 300km. They were brightly dressed and lightly veiled over hand-embroidered pillbox hats as they skipped across dizzying, slatted bridges.

Stockpiling for winter, they collect vegetables and fodder: in a patchwork of colour tomatoes, spinach and pumpkins are spread on the rooftops to dry. Inside, extended families huddle in a single room.

Men who were once the scourge of the caravan routes, enriching the coffers of the ruling tribe with their plunder, have become peaceable farmers. Their children daily trail satchels to school. The descendants of the erstwhile rulers, no longer engaged in fratricidal wars of succession, have abandoned their stronghold of Baltit Fort for a less lofty modern residence, complete with satellite dish. Politics have been traded for



Rakaposhi's peak soars over the Hunza Valley, where garnets rain down mineral-studded seams of rock

commerce. The effects of Star TV and the burgeoning hotel industry lie not far behind.

But once among the yaks on the remote plains of the Khunjerab Pass, any such fears evaporate. At 4,700m, I stood light-headed on the highest paved road in the world. Journey's End. Our guide, resplendent against the yellow wilderness, was in the traditional Hunzakut costume of long white coat with wizard-sleeves tapering to the ground. Even he is shivering in the sub-zero winds. He magics a dram of the illegal mulberry Hunza Water — proof against the cold. It works wonders. Perhaps this is the secret of the Hunzakuts' longevity.

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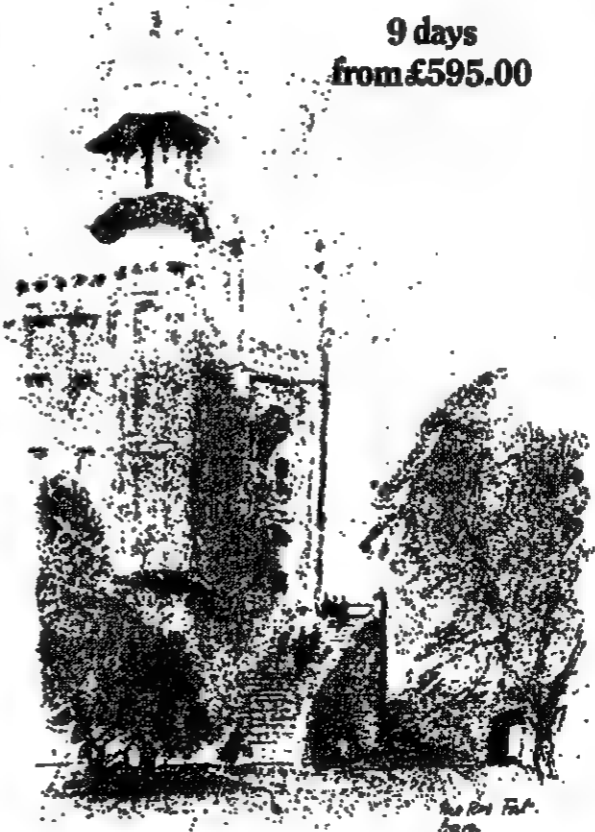
A Few Days in Rajasthan

Not everyone wants to go on a whistle-stop tour around India, getting up, packing and unpacking every day. Nor are some of those people who are looking for the beauty of the place when balanced with the comforts and the lack of facilities in the remote areas. This tour therefore is designed to be leisurely and comfortable within the context of India and aims to explore three major areas in depth, allowing sufficient time for independent sightseeing or simply to relax in the shade of a banyan tree, perhaps in a beautiful garden or watching the inevitable sunset.

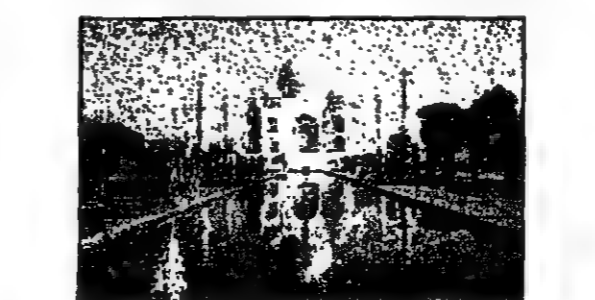
Our itinerary commences with a flight from London Heathrow to Delhi for a two-night stay at the Hotel Kamisha. During our stay visits will be made to both Old and New Delhi and in particular the Red Fort and the Lutyens-designed centre of the city. From Delhi we travel south to Agra, where the route allows a glimpse of the Indian countryside, for a one-night stay in the Ashok Hotel, enroute for visiting the Taj Mahal.

We continue our exploration of Rajasthan by travelling to Fatehpur Sikri where we make a short visit before proceeding to Jaipur and the Ashok Hotel for a two-night stay. In Jaipur we will visit the Amber Fort by elephant before returning to Delhi for the last two nights before our return to London Heathrow.

Itinerary
Day 1 In the morning depart with Royal Jordanian Airlines from London Heathrow via Amman and fly through the night arriving in Delhi the following morning.
Day 2 Delhi - arrive in Delhi and transfer to our hotel with time to settle in and, for those with the energy, to explore independently.
Day 3 Delhi - our exploration commences with a tour of New Delhi - we visit Humayun's Tomb and further into the southern suburbs reach the private of the Old Delhi. In the afternoon drive to Old Delhi to visit the Jama Masjid mosque, the Red Fort and trace the path of the Indian Mutiny with a visit to Skinner's Church and see the Kashmir Gate. Metcalfe House, the first Rajasth Lodge (now part of Delhi University), the Civil Lines and the memorial to those who fell in 1857.
Day 4 Agra - after breakfast we depart by road for Agra, 125 miles from Delhi following a scenic glimpse of the Indian countryside and village life. We stop at Sikandra to visit the tomb of Akbar. Completed in 1613, it combines features of both Hindu and Muslim architecture. Shortly after we arrive in Agra.
Day 5 Agra - this morning make a tour of the city and visit the Taj Mahal for a close inspection of the fine and detailed inlay work. We will



visiting Delhi, Agra (Taj Mahal), Fatehpur Sikri and Jaipur with an optional extension to Udaipur or Jordan (Amman and Petra)



also take in the massive fort. In the afternoon travel by road on the 140-mile journey to the city of Jaipur. Enroute we pause at the deserted site of Fatehpur Sikri - a complete township built by emperor Akbar but which was deserted after 17 years as the wells ran dry.
Day 6 Jaipur - depart on a city sightseeing tour including the city palace which is in the heart of the old city, now an museum. We will also see Jantar Mantar, the fascinating astrological observatory built by Jai Singh in 1728, and the Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds). Travel outside Jaipur to the glamorous Amber Fort built in 1592 which is reflected in the lake below. The traditional mode of ascent to the fort is by a short elephant ride.
Day 7 The morning is free. In the afternoon we commence the return journey to Delhi travelling by road and arriving in the late afternoon.
Day 8 The whole day is free in Delhi for independent sightseeing.

Fact file
□ The author was a guest of Cox & Kings (0171-573 5000) and of Walji Travel, Pakistan. Cox & Kings offers 16-day trips through the North West Frontier Province and Northern Areas of Pakistan from April to October. Prices from £1,545 per person.
□ Pakistan International Airlines has three direct flights per week to Karachi and two to Islamabad from London (0171-734 5644), starting from £525 return (Karachi) and £624 return (Islamabad).
□ The five-hour bus journey to Madyan from Islamabad bus station costs just over £1. Fida Mohammad's Caravans Guest House on Madyan Road asks for directions at Nuambar Khan's shop which has double rooms with cold shower from £1.50. For a plus, weather accommodation can be had at the VIP Hotel (telephone 4599) or at the River Palace (42). There is no direct dialling service to Madyan from the UK.
□ Immunisation against malaria, cholera, typhoid, yellow fever, polio, meningitis, hepatitis and tetanus is recommended.
□ Drink only sealed and bottled water. Avoid ice and salads, and peel all fruit.
□ Alcohol is prohibited in Pakistan, apart from one bar at the Pearl Continental in Peshawar. With a liquor permit, alcohol can be drunk in hotel rooms.
□ A departure tax of 200 rupees (£4) - 300 (£6) in business class, 400 (£8) in first class - is levied on leaving Pakistan.
□ Pakistan Trekking Guide £11.95; Introduction to Pakistan, £5.95, both by Odyssey. Lonely Planet's Travel Survival Kit for Pakistan, £9.95.

9 days from £595.00
Day 9 There is an early morning transfer to the airport to board the flight from Delhi via Amman arriving at Heathrow in the afternoon.
Udaipur Extension
You may, if you so wish, extend your visit in Rajasthan by two nights to include a visit to Udaipur. The itinerary would then be as follows:
Day 7 Udaipur - fly from Jaipur to Udaipur and transfer to the hotel.
Day 8 Sightseeing of Udaipur.
Day 9 Fly from Udaipur to Delhi for a two-night stay.
Day 10 The whole day is free.
Day 11 Fly from Delhi to London arriving in the afternoon.
Amman & Petra Extension
Alternatively you may elect to discover in Amman for two nights at the end of your stay in India with visits to Petra and Jerash. The itinerary would then be as follows:
Day 9 Fly from Delhi to Amman. Tour the city and visit Jerash.
Day 10 A full-day tour to Petra.
Day 11 Return flight to London Heathrow arriving in the afternoon.
Please note that these extensions can only be booked in advance at the same time as making the main booking.

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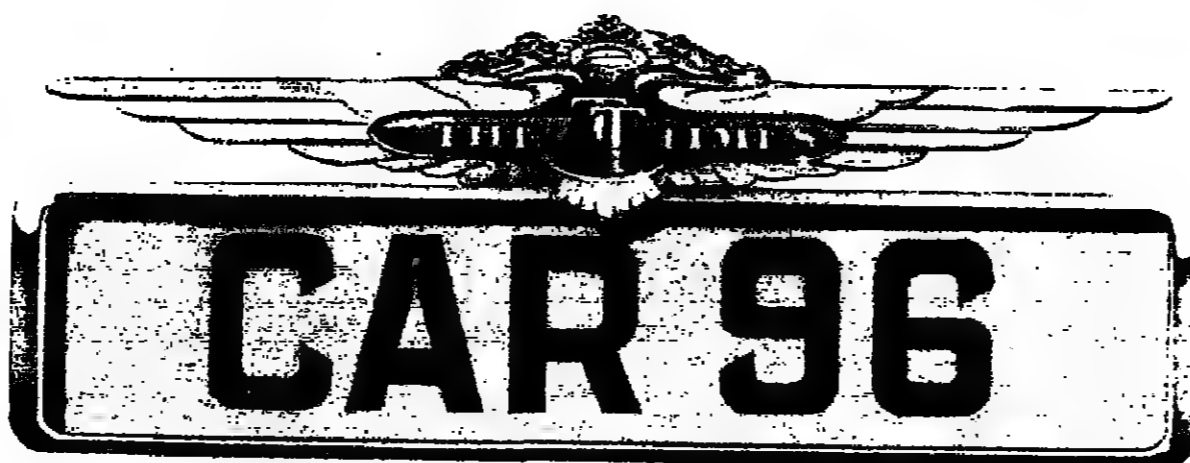
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Page 10



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Page 5

SATURDAY MARCH 23 1996

Alan Copps celebrates the famous as we start hunting the forgotten Obsessed with Britain's classic system

It is more than
a passion; it is
a £1bn a year
industry that
earns millions
in export sales

Some simply stand and stare in awe, not daring to step too close to the gleaming machines. Others cannot get close enough: heads disappear beneath bonnets, into boots and one man wriggles along the floor and crawls underneath. A classic car is guaranteed to produce a strong reaction in the British public.

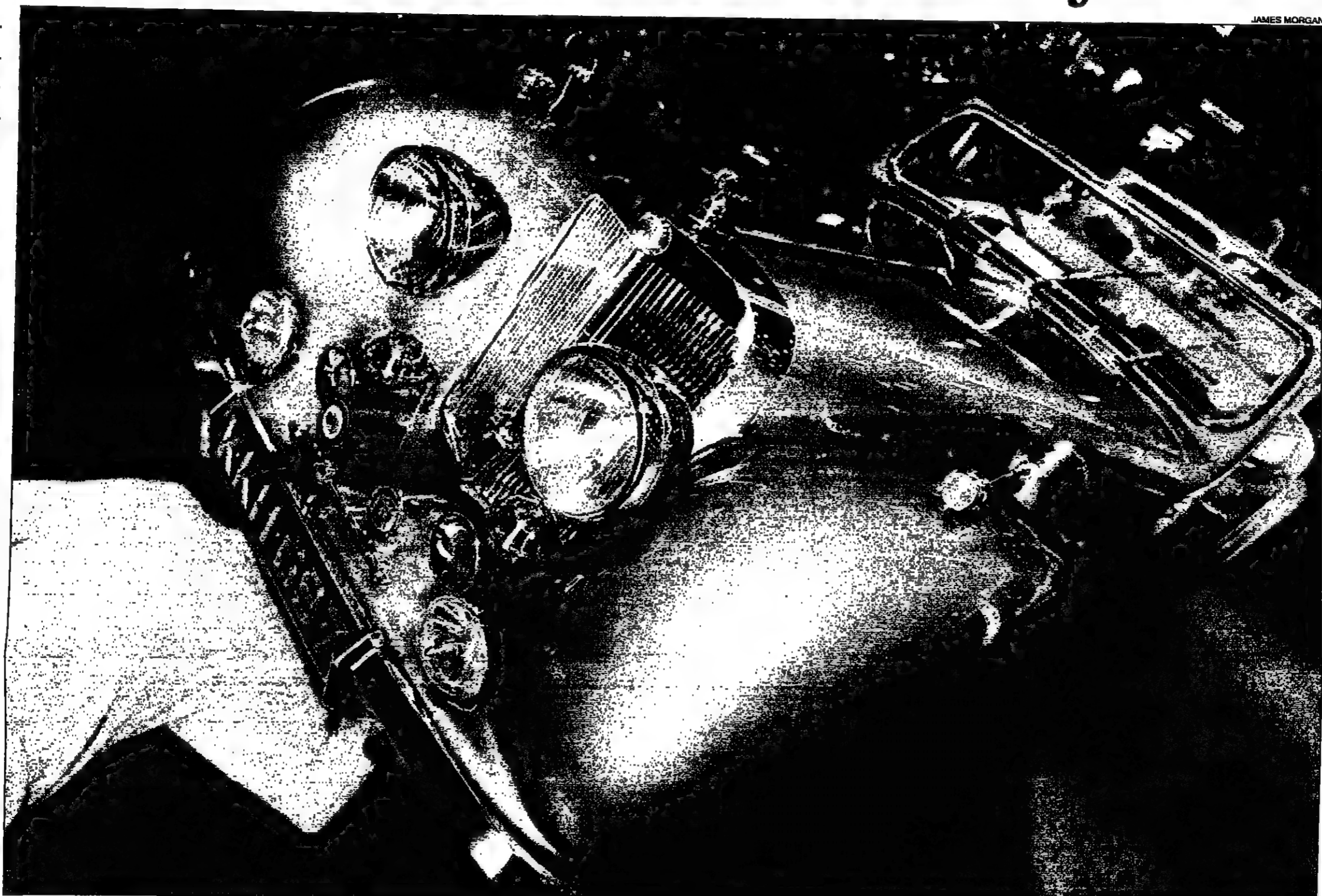
These scenes from last weekend's show at London's Alexandra Palace will be repeated throughout the spring and summer. Every weekend boasts a rally, time trial, sprint, show, concours d'elegance or race meeting.

But historic vehicles now represent far more than nostalgia, family fun, the snobs' delight or enthusiasts' thrills. This national passion has spawned an industry that has weathered recession as well as any and on which business worth £1 billion and exports worth millions depend.

Today, at the Heritage Centre at Gaydon, Warwickshire, home of one of Britain's finest collections of automobiles, the great and the good of the classic car movement will discuss not just chrome, polish and restoration but cash, policy and preservation. The business is important enough to influence government policy and attract big money from major manufacturers. But just what is it worth?

Putting a value on Britain's classic car business is not easy: for a successful industry it must be one of the most fragmented, ranging from the international auction houses and dealers in cars that may be worth £1 million each to suppliers of spares and backstreet boffins who specialise in turning the perfect valve — maybe 5,000 companies in all. Its political lobby secured exemption from road tax for 25-year-old cars.

Robert Brooks, head of Britain's leading classic car auction house, says that the UK auction market is worth about £50 million a year, with dealer and private sales probably worth four times as much. Add in restoration, spares, insurance, the wages of the thousands employed in the business, the funding of museums and the administration and sponsorship of events ranging from club meetings to next year's British-organised Peking to Paris centenary run and the £1 billion looks realistic. Perhaps a quarter of that represents export business. Brooks holds auctions in Monte Carlo, France and Australia as well as Britain, and on April 20 launches a joint venture in Germany with a sale at the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart.



Mechanical boom: a visitor to London's Alexandra Palace shows classic enthusiasm for a business that influences government policy, attracts big money from major manufacturers and employs thousands of people

The big carmakers are rapidly realising the importance of the classic movement. Key-note speaker at Gaydon will be Nick Scheele, chairman and chief executive of Jaguar, fresh from introducing, at the Geneva Motor Show, the long-awaited XK8, the result of a massive investment by the company's multi-national parent, Ford. Yet however much is invested in advertising this state-of-the-art sports car, thanks to the fervour of those who bear the flame for classics it will never escape the tag "spiritual successor to the E-type". Scheele and others will talk about classics of the past and the future, how the "big" carmaking industry can help enthusiasts with technology and advice and about the challenges of environmental concerns and changes in permitted fuels.

Jaguar, which also includes Daimler the company that founded the British motor industry 100 years ago, is one of the favourite subjects for preservation. At the Essen classic car show, German

enthusiasts were snapping up Mark II Jaguars for up to £50,000 each, a price reflecting the value of restoration carried out largely in Britain.

The conference is sponsored by the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs, which links an estimated 300,000 enthusiasts belonging to more than 300 clubs across the country, their interests ranging from cars to scooters and from buses to steamrollers. Its chairman, Peter Glover, estimates that the collective membership is responsible for a million vehicles.

"We represent clubs for enthusiasts, but a lot of them are now run by full-time employees," he says. "We are conscious that thousands of people depend upon the old car scene for employment."

Robert Coucher, editor of *Classic Car* magazine, says: "I would think the classic car business is now close to a billion pound industry. We have well over 3,000 companies on our register of specialists and a lot of their business would be for export."

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, president of the FBHVC, who will open the conference, is quick to point out that the preservation movement began in Britain 70 years ago. "The implications of the business are now enormous. Apart from the sales and spares, there are events worldwide, autoshows, auctions and it generates huge numbers of books and magazines. I did the first Jaguar book in the 1960s; there are now more than 300 on that make alone."

I proposed this conference because of the big changes in the movement. When I started the National Motor Museum in 1952, the emphasis was on veteran cars, now the road cars of that era — the Zephyrs and Zodiacs — are regarded as classics in their own right. More and more people want to use these cars on the road and that raises big issues such as road tax, environmental legislation and ethical problems such as when a restoration turns a car into a fake."

Born in Coventry, died in... where?

Kevin Eason invites *Car 96* readers to help find a city's lost carmakers

WHEN the candles go out on the motor industry's centenary birthday cake, spare a thought for the hapless executives of the Couder motor company. Their ambition would have been to have their car a proud part of the celebrations — but the company failed to make it into the industry's history book, except as a bizarre footnote.

For Couder is one of the legion of motor companies that started with bright hopes only to fall apart almost as soon as they began.

Over the past century, 132 carmakers set up in Coventry; today there are just two major ones left in the form of Peugeot and Jaguar. And a study by Paul Collins and Michael Stratton shows graphically just how high the attrition rate has been down the years among carmakers for whom survival was a bigger issue than glory.

Coventry City officials have

combed the record books, museums and enthusiasts' clubs, but can find only 40 surviving cars of the 132 marques that have come and gone from the city.

Even among the survivors, there is sometimes only a lone car as the metal memorial to the hopes and efforts of the industry's pioneers. Today, *Car 96* starts a quest to find the missing links — cars hidden in barns, at the back of museums or hidden under dusty sheets deep in a dark garage — so that they can take their place in Coventry's tribute to 100 years of car manufacturing in the city.

Our readers might know the location of cars from Arno, Acme and Albatros or Awson, Daisy, Dutton, Cluley, Emms, Gravenor, Hamilton, Priory,



COVENTRY

Raglan, Rex, Ryley or Viking. The list of Coventry's carmakers is a long and strange roll call of births, deaths and marriages over 100 years.

The questions it poses though is: what happened to all those carmakers and their cars? Some were bought out by the industry's Big Brothers, their names and technology absorbed to such an extent that few people know those fledgling companies even existed; but others clearly never stood a chance, perhaps

because they were undercapitalised — or were just incompetent, their cars so deeply flawed that even a novice public knowing little of new-fangled automobiles saw the potential for trouble.

What happened to Couder, for example? Records show that the company set up in Lythalls Lane in Coventry in 1923. And then they weren't there any more; they simply ceased to exist sometime that same year. Nobody seems ever to have seen a Couder car, let alone ridden in one. Even Coventry's Museum of British Road Transport, which has a wide selection of Coventry-made models, is baffled after months of searching for the missing pieces in its jigsaw of the city's motoring history. Yet somebody must have clues as to where the missing models are. Coventry was Britain's

Continued on p3

Forget when it was built. Consider who built it.



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AA GRIDLOCK GUIDE

LONDON

A2 Rochester Way, Bexley. Overnight lane closures between Bourne Road flyover and Crayford railway bridge.

A4 Great West Road, Chiswick. Between 9pm and 8am Monday-Thursday reduced to one lane each way for repairs to the M4 above.

A12 Eastern Avenue, Wandsworth. Construction of M11 link road continues, with east-bound reduced to a single lane between Redbridge roundabout and High Street.

A243 Leatherhead, bypassing and alteration work at junction with Kingston Road.

A406 North Circular Road, Upper Edmonton. Major roadworks continue over the Lea Valley viaduct.

A406 North Circular Road, Finchley. Major roadworks continue with various restrictions between the A1 and A1000 junctions.

MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA

A6 Leicestershire. Major roadworks and contraflow at junction 24 of the M1 and Sawley Island.

M69 Leicestershire. Link road from the M69 to M1 north-bound closed at junction 21. A short diversion is in operation via the roundabout.

A11 Norfolk. Construction of Wymondham bypass continues, with lane and speed restrictions between Hethersett and Attleborough.

A47 Norfolk. Major roadworks at Terrington St John and at Swanton.

M6 Staffordshire. North and southbound entry sliproads on to motorway closed at junction 11 while work is carried out on the A460.

NORTH

M65 Lancashire. Down to one lane in both directions between junctions 10 and 14 between 9.30am and 4.00pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

M6 Cheshire. Widening work continues between junctions 20 and 21.

A5063 Greater Manchester. Major roadworks and lane closures on Trafford Road, near junction with Pomona Strand.

A630 South Yorkshire. Major roadworks and contraflow on the Rotherway at Canklow, between junction 33 of the M1 and Rotherham.

A1674 Tyne-side. Northbound lane closure on Newcastle central motorway near Jesmond Road interchange.

M1 West Yorkshire. Roadworks and contraflow at end of motorway at junction 47.

WALES

A550 Clwyd. Narrow lanes and 40mph limit for construction of a new interchange. One lane closed southbound during the week between 9.30am and 3.30pm, and on Saturdays between 9.30am and 1.00pm.

M4 Gwent. Widening work continues in connection with between junctions 22 and 24.

A48 West Glamorgan. Construction work with lane closures on all approaches to the Wychtree roundabout at Morriston.

A483 West Glamorgan. Major roadworks and contraflow on Fabian Way, Swansea between Elba Crescent and the Eastwood lights.

SCOTLAND

M8 Strathclyde. Lane restrictions westbound at junction 15. "narrowway" down to three narrow lanes.

A749 Strathclyde. Dalmeadow Bridge, Glasgow closed southbound for repairs.

M90 Tayside. Major roadworks at junction 11 with lane closures in both directions.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Tyres at risk

HALF the cars on Britain's roads are running on tyres with illegal tread, according to the National Tyres Distributors Association. The association's members inspected more than 300,000 tyres and discovered 48 per cent did not meet the legal minimum of 1.6 millimetres of tread depth. Alarmingly, 17 per cent of those tyres were also severely damaged in a way which could lead to blowouts. Richard Edy, the association's director, says: "The survey confirms fears that motorists still fail to regard tyres as safety critical components."

In the wee small hours

THINKING of a new insurance policy? When exactly? If you live in Essex, apparently you are likely to ring for a quote as late as 2am, according to PremiumSearch. The direct insurer runs 24-hour telephone lines and claims that motorists in Essex are the latest to call, followed by drivers in Hertfordshire and the Midlands, who are also "night owls". Drivers in Northamptonshire are the earliest risers, accounting for 14 per cent of calls from 6am, followed by Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Strictly for the girls

A TRIUMPH no doubt for the market researchers, but what are we to make of surveys that show lesbians are four times more likely to choose a Subaru? According to *Automotive News* in the US, the Japanese company is now targeting lesbians, running ads which endearingly say: "It loves camping, dogs and long-term commitment. Too bad it's only a car." Aaaah.

They have a suggestion

CLEVER workers at Rover have won £850,000 in the company suggestion scheme - which saved the business more than £6 million last year. The company has twigged to the fact the workers know best how assembly lines run and now offers prizes worth up to £5,000 and a car for the best money-saving suggestion. Of more than 21,000 suggestions, 4,000 were accepted and are now operating.

Directions to Little Snoring are brought to you by Slumberland, makers of quality beds... is this the real world?

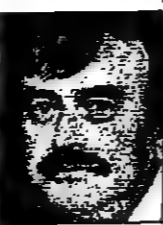
These are clear signs of madness

When my colleague Kevin Eason appeared on the *Today* programme on Monday talking about sponsored signposts, I assumed I was having a bad dream and went back to sleep. Only later did Kevin's story in *The Times* confirm that the world had indeed gone mad.

The great thing about what passes for real life in Whitehall is that you could not make it up. If you were to stumble around a saloon bar telling people that the Minister of State at the Department of Transport, as his contribution to helping drivers to concentrate, proposed to put adverts on signposts you would be chucked out for behaviour likely to lead to a breach of the peace.

John Watts, the said minister, apparently believes that sponsored signposts are the answer to a "shortfall" in the DoT's budget. We shall leave aside the fact that motorists give the Government £25 billion a year and get £5 billion spent in return - the sort of "shortfall" my bank account could do with - and pass quickly on.

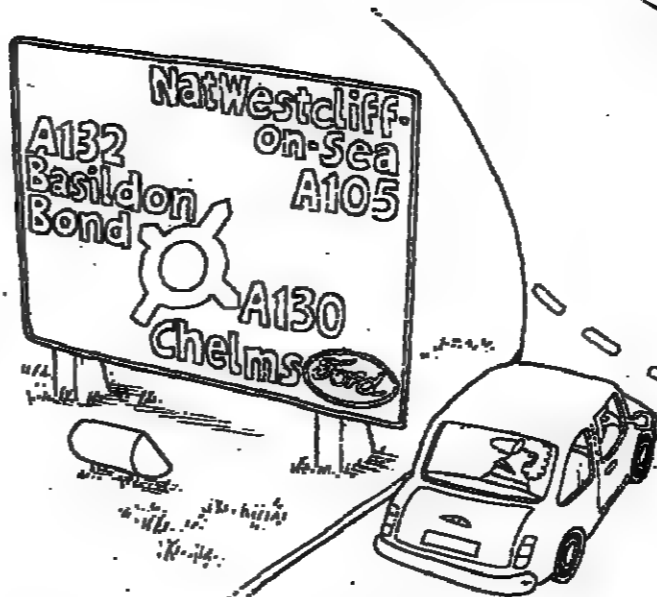
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

Of course there is nothing wrong with the principle of signposts that advertise products. This has been going on for centuries. I expect stagecoach drivers once raised their spirits by discovering that they were fast approaching Bourneville or Cheddar without feeling the urgent need for a bar of chocolate or a lump of cheese.

But I would have thought there was a large step to be taken between that and the deliberate carrying of



advertising on, say, the signpost to Aldenham. Incidentally, would this desirable location be sold to British Nuclear Fuels or CND?

My eldest daughter, who lives at Benson in Oxfordshire, has already called to express her relief that the next village is not called Hedges. However she is not far from Newbury, whose signposts will soon be the subject of a bidding war between Friends of the Earth and Tarmac. My parents, who live in

Plymouth, do not much look forward to being guided homeward by a giant bottle of gin.

In case anyone thinks that the Watts initiative is some spur of the moment thing, this is far from the case. Mr Watts has clearly thought it through... or halfway through. He has swept aside the objections of the AA, for example, like a joyrider flattening a bollard.

The AA mildly ventured the thought that drivers might be "dis-

tracted" by sponsorship messages as they peered through rain, fog and other manifestations of the British climate in search of the road to Waford. Distracted! What a bunch of wimps!

"This would be a way of applying the Private Finance Initiative for the benefit of motorists," says Mr Watts. "Road signs could be better constructed with the aid of private sponsorship."

Oh, I see. Or rather, no I don't see. This statement is twaddle. What it means is: hello, here's a way of making some money. How in the name of sanity could a road sign be better constructed by having a sponsor? I have been saying for months that the Department of Transport ought to be closed down because it has no sensible role: Mr Watts has proved I am right.

Unfortunately, it appears that this daft scheme will not quickly go away. For Mr Watts promises us "primary legislation". A whole Bill, in other words, to enable signposts to be cluttered up with advertising slogans. As I said, you could not make it up - pure Watts in Wonderland, sponsored by Walt Disney.

Still, I cannot hang about talking to you lot much longer, as I have to rush off up the A67 to affix this column's logo to a signpost: Barnard Castle, one mile. Driven to Distraction could hardly be a more appropriate opening sponsor.

Messing about in quotes

Direct insurance means you pick up the telephone and they tell you exactly what it will cost... or do they? Sue Baker investigates

When direct insurance arrived, it offered two things: all you needed to do was pick up a phone and premiums would be lower. The latter appears to be something of a lottery, and may depend on when you make your call and who answers as you shop around.

A survey of more than 20 car insurers for *Car 96* has revealed not only wide gaps between quotes, but also surprising discrepancies between premiums offered by the same company at different times.

We sought quotes for three car owners: a young bachelor male with a BMW, a thirtysomething woman with a family Ford, and a middle-aged man with a sports Rover. For each quote we rang the same company twice, giving identical details each time, but using a different name on the second call. In some cases quotes differed by only a few pounds, but in others it was by £40 or more, and one quote changed by more than £300.

The first driver for whom we sought cover is a 21-year-old office worker from Grays in Essex. He has held a licence for three years, has two years' no claims discount and drives an eight-year-old, E-registration BMW 316 worth about £3,800. It has an immobiliser, and is left parked overnight outside his home.

More than half the companies declined to quote, and only 11 of those surveyed were prepared to offer him insurance. A day later, he rang them all again. This time only 10 would give him a quote and one company, which had done so a day earlier, now declined. Of the others, only two quoted the same premium and excess as before. Three gave the same

quote with a different excess. One increased the premium by 30p, but reduced the excess by £25. Three companies gave a higher quote the second time; one was now lower.

There was also a gulf between the highest and lowest quotes. The cheapest premium he was offered, by Norwich Union Direct, was £607. The dearest, quoted by Help Insurance, was £1,227. Our second test case is a 35-year-old nurse living in Nottingham, who drives a Ford Mondeo worth about £9,000. It has a standard Ford alarm and immobiliser and is garaged overnight. She has been driving for 15 years and has a full no-claims bonus, but has a conviction for speeding.

We tried all same companies again. This time none of them shunned her business, but five quotes changed between the two calls, one by more than £150. Again there was wide variation in what she was invited to pay, ranging from £167 with Sun Alliance Union Direct.

Test case three is a 51-year-old self-employed painter and decorator, who, like the young driver, lives at Grays in Essex. He has been driving for 30 years and has a clean licence. He has a three-year-old sports Rover 214i 16-valve, K registration and with a standard Rover alarm.

Again, quotes differed. Seven varied from the day before, one by more than £30. The cheapest premium offered was £124 with Guardian Direct, the dearest £254 with Zurich.

How can the wide variations made by the same company for the same risk happen? James Wooten, director of Motor Advice, the car insurance monitoring service which assisted us with the

'We all need to improve our systems'



Insurance advertising in the Fifties: the motorist's problem today may be confusion rather than confrontation

survey, surmises that they are caused by weary telephone quote line operators making slight errors while keying in the information they are given. "I think one of the problems is that it is a rather dull job and perhaps an operator's attention may lapse occasionally after hours of gazing at the screen," he said. "Apart from that, I can give no explanation. It just should not happen."

The biggest variation in quotes came from one of the newest direct companies, Help Insurance. Overnight, the premium quoted to the same driver changed by £304.52p. Underwriting assistant general manager Chris Hanks was refreshingly frank. "Help is very new, a pilot operation, so we are still settling down. I am unhappy to hear that people got different quotes on different days for the same set of circumstances, and I wouldn't want it to happen, but we are still on the learning curve."

Direct motor insurance is "a very dynamic environment,"

says Hanks. "Some companies do change their rates day by day. They go after a certain area of business for a limited time and then change back and try something else. I think what your survey has shown up is all about the growing pains of the direct insurance business. We all need to improve our systems, make our screens more user-friendly and improve the quality of training for the operators who take the calls."

The second largest disparity was the £153 difference between two quotes, a few hours apart, sought from Privilege for the woman driver. It transpired that, although she said in both calls that she had a full no-claims discount, Privilege's records showed that the second, higher quote had been based on the operator noting a no-claims record of only one year.

Spokesperson Nina Wheeler said that if a mistake had been made and a higher than necessary premium quoted, it would have been put right when the proposal form was completed.

HOW THE QUOTES VARIED

Robert Taylor (Steven Smith on second call), a 21-year-old administration assistant driving an eight-year-old BMW 318 and living in Grays, Essex.

Company	Taylor	Smith	Difference
Help Insurance	£923.36	£1,227.90	\$304.52
Insurance Service	£746.07	£768.07	£22.00
Norwich Union Direct	£607.07	£640.18	£33.11
Zurich	£1,007.00	No quote	—
Broker	£908.14	£982.00	£73.86

*Zurich declined a quotation to "Smith", although personal details were the same as for "Taylor".

Ann Smith (Sarah Baker), a 35-year-old nurse from Nottingham driving a Ford Mondeo.

Company	Smith	Baker	Difference
Eagle Star Direct	£218.28	£223.25	£3.97
Insurance Service	£230.11	£256.24	£26.13
Norwich Union Direct	£196.33	£196.21	£0.12
Privilege	£209.00	£382.00	£173.00
Royal Direct	£228.99	£270.04	£41.05

Alan Thompson (David Brown), a 51-year-old builder driving a Rover 2145i and also living in Grays.

Company	Thompson	Brown	Difference
Admiral	£207.06	£203.00	£4.06
Commercial Union Direct	£254.25	£210.07	£44.18
Direct Line	£158.90	£158.90	£0.00
Eagle Star Direct	£196.33	£200.00	£33.67
General Accident Direct	£199.92	£176.32	£23.60
Zurich	£254.55	£212.62	£41.93
Premium Search	£169.45	£160.41	£9.04

Cheaper, smaller and plusher

Vaughan Freeman explains why new car prices will keep falling

three or four years, and then looks to part-exchange it against a replacement new vehicle.

By reducing the cost of a car new, manufacturers hope to protect that used value or

"residual" value of the car second-hand, so that when they are ready to buy another new car and part-exchange it against their old one, the owner is left with more equity in their old vehicle, so making

the purchase less painful financially.

McAlister says cars will get smaller but more luxurious. Where once only 8 per cent of small Fords sold were Ghia cars, fitted with every luxury available, today that has risen to 20 per cent as customers demand greater comfort.

He believes it is a trend that will continue. Young motor-

ists just starting out on their driving career, or older drivers who have seen their children grow up and no longer need a big car, will seek ever smaller alternatives, such as the Ford Ka, a sawn-off version of the Fiesta, VW Beetle, or Fiat Cinquecento.

However, where once small cars were seen as budget boxes in which wing mirrors and a radio were costly extras, motorists increasingly expect small cars to have big car safety and equipment - and the price will have to be right.

AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans



VANILLA MOTOR was first established in 1981 in London on the site of the former FALKS HALL OF A MEDICAL LABORATORY, FALKS HALL OF A MEDICAL LABORATORY, FALKS HALL OF A MEDICAL LABORATORY.

AFTER BEING HIS FIRST RACING CAR, THE YOUNG NICK LAUREN TOLD HIS DISAPPOINTED PARENTS THEY HAD NO MORE MONEY TO SPEND ON IT. FOR A PROBABLY...

STONER'S SINGING DUTY, RAINING LOU, AND DESIGNED THE AGA COURSE...

SATURDAY MARCH 23 1996

CAR 96

'They passed into oblivion, but would be a wonderful addition to our heritage'

Continued from p1

motoring Klondike at the turn of the century, companies sprouting up in every street to strike the gold of designing a car that would become world renowned. But companies waxed and waned, struggling against the problems of developing new cars at huge cost against competition from big corporations.

Harry J. Lawson was the father of the motor industry in Coventry, incorporating his Daimler Motor Syndicate in 1896. But he was simply the first to the lawyers' office because engineers were hammering and welding cars together before then, employing the skills of the city's bicycle and sewing machine makers. A year before, Frederick Lanchester had made a car in Birmingham, while, in the same city, a young man working as general manager of the Wolsley Sheep Shearing Company had made a three-wheeled car, his name was Herbert Austin.

But Coventry was a natural location for the birth of the British motor car: the city had companies with workers used to machine tools and "metal bashing" and there were dozens of businesses looking for opportunities to make products that would get them out of the slump in bicycle manufacturing.

Unfortunately, most cars on sale had to be imported because Lawson had a lock on patents for the Benz engine which stifled development until the courts released his control in 1901. That was the signal for an explosion of carmaking: within five years there were 50 registered carmakers in Britain, most extending established businesses involved in marine engineering, cycle-making and horse-drawn carriages. By 1911, Coventry was employing 6,838 workers in the car industry, turning out 9,000 vehicles a year. By 1921, the employment figure was up to almost 18,700 and growing as carmaking flourished.

Companies such as Clark Cluley, a business founded in 1890 as textile machinists but which was soon fostering ambitions to join the motoring revolution, entered the fray. The company made bicycles and a tri-car, called the Globe Cymocar, but in 1922 decided to make the real thing, launching the Cluley Light Car and following up with a six-cylinder model. The experiment lasted only six years though the Cluley dying out as quickly as it was founded, the cars lost for generations to come — the sort of model Car 96 wants to trace.

Even companies which managed to become established produced models that seem to have disappeared forever. When Henry Segrave was the 1920s equivalent of Damon Hill, he gave his name to Hillman's Straight 8 Segrave Model. Hillman, formed by William Hillman, once a manufacturer of bikes and roller skates — went on to be absorbed by the Rootes Group and then Chrysler, and the Segrave car has never been traced, making it another we want to find.

Lea-Francis was formed in 1895, but did not start making cars until the 1920s, finding success with its sports models. Including the Hyper, one of which won the 1928 Ulster TT driven by Kaye Don. But Lea-Francis was beset by financial problems, finally expiring in 1954. The company name has

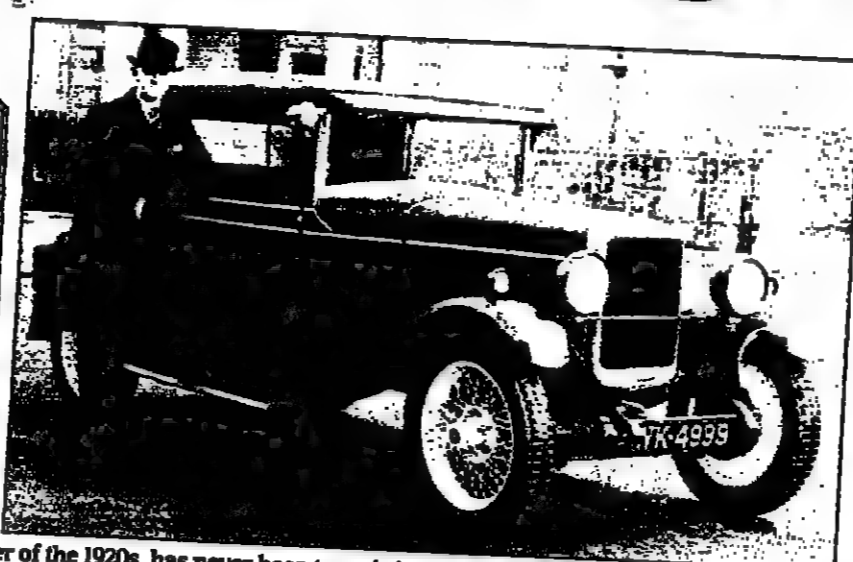
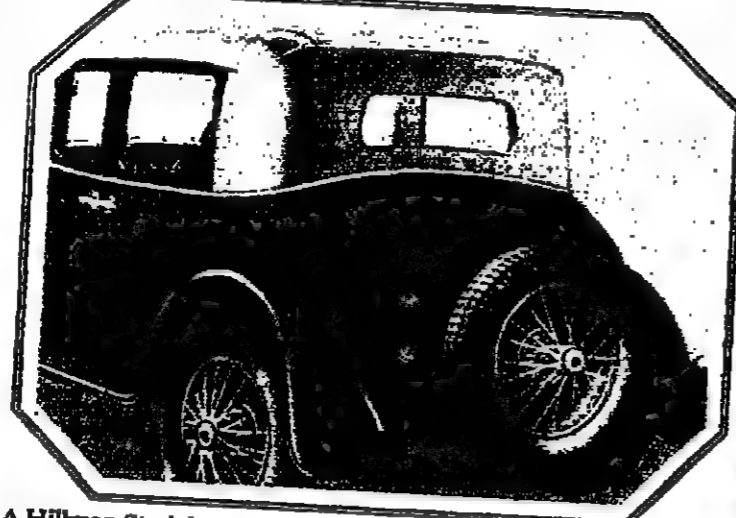
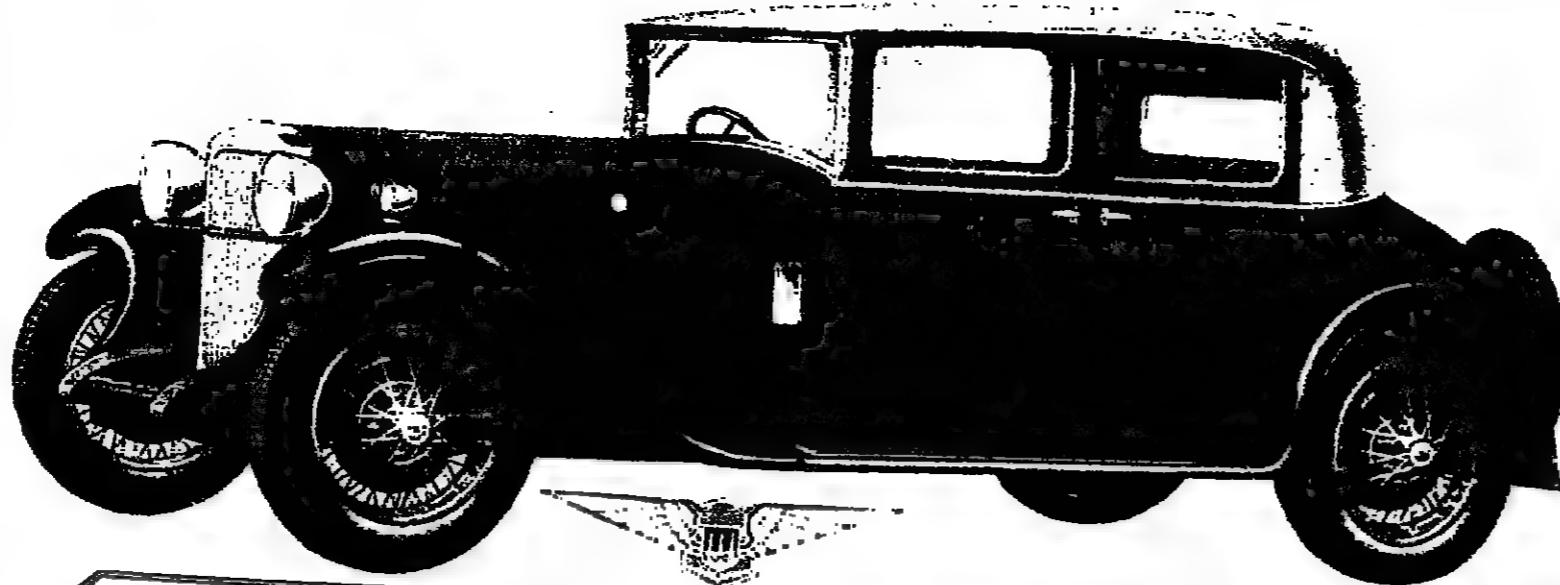
been revived twice since, but that Hyper model probably represents the zenith of the company's efforts and a car which would find a fitting place in our investigations. John Horton, one of the team organising Coventry's

summer celebrations, says: "Some of these models just seemed to vanish off the face of the earth. It is fascinating that there have been as many as 132 companies operating in and around Coventry over the past 100 years. They were

obviously businesses that planned to make cars and become successful manufacturers, but so many were here one day and gone the next. Many models have disappeared into oblivion, but if we can trace some of them, they


would be a wonderful addition to our heritage and our centenary celebrations." So the quest has started to find the cars of Coventry's yesteryear, the most obscure and rare models that flickered briefly into brilliant life only to

be killed off by the harshness of economic life or the vagaries of public taste. Somewhere out there are cars with the most unlikely names. But if you know where they are, join the Car 96 quest to find a lost heritage.



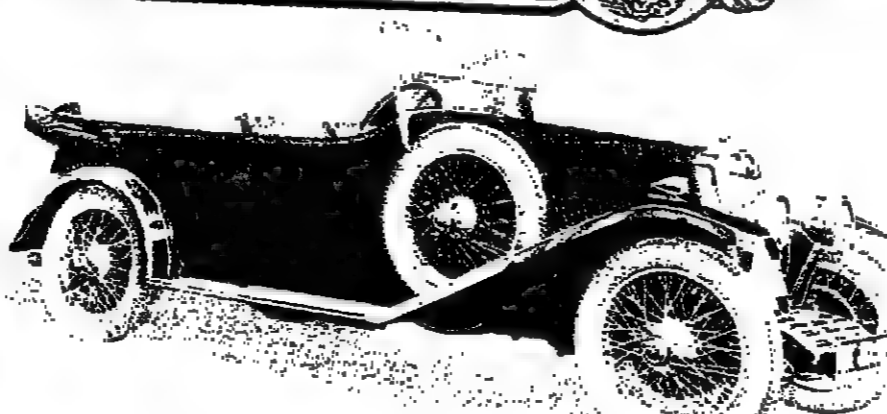
A Hillman Straight 8 Segrave, named after the legendary racing driver of the 1920s, has never been traced since the original company was taken over

ANNOUNCING
THE 10 HP TWO-SEATER



Has anybody here seen Cluley? Founded in 1890 as textile machinists, the company made its first real car in 1922: six years later they vanished

LEA-FRANCIS



Founded in 1895, Lea-Francis was a more successful survivor, lasting as a carmaker from 1920 to 1954. Its Hyper model was the peak of its achievements



The unique 1935 Bentley 3 1/2-litre on sale this weekend

ONE OF the staples of the classic car market is the "barn find" — the rare or historic car tucked away when it was replaced or left when an owner died.

"You might have thought that anyone who owned a barn would have gone and combed it for the last wheel nut when prices were so high in the 1980s, yet still amazing things turn up," says Robert Brooks, Britain's leading classic car auctioneer. These vehicles often neglected for decades and sometimes no more than a box of bits don't sell for the highest prices but offer extraordinary opportunities to restorers.

A Brooks sale at London's Olympia today features several examples including a unique 1935 Bentley 3 1/2-litre with coupe

de ville coachwork by Park Ward and bearing the registration B 76, itself a valuable asset and included in the £6,000-£8,000 estimate.

There is also a 1929 Belgian-built Minerva dismantled after being rescued from a scrapyard 30 years ago minus its bodywork and has since been stored but not restored. Its estimate is £2,000-£4,000. A sadly neglected Bristol 403 is also offered as a restoration project at £1,500-£2,000. At the other end of the scale are two perfectly preserved veterans: a 1902 Glasgow-built Arrol-Johnston six-seater Dog Cart (£30,000-£40,000) and a 1901 De Dion-Bouton four seater (£20,000-£25,000). Although the car's history is known since 1907, its maker remains a mystery.



Hugo Spowers and the reconstructed 1969 Jaguar

THE CAR that Hugo Spowers and his specialists at Prowess Racing have just renovated hardly reflects the finest hour of the British motor industry. But it is a brilliant example of how the classic car business can produce something better than new.

The 1969 Jaguar Mk X 420G was built when the car industry here was renowned more for strikes than for technology or build quality. The restored version will be driven by Takehiko Abe, a Japanese cosmetics tycoon, after a year-long £90,000 rebuild. It is an original limousine with the retro looks sought after in Japan, 1990s build quality and brakes and suspension a lot better than the originals.

What Prowess has done is virtually to reconstruct the car from the interior of its steel chassis to the last dot of chrome on the headlamps. "Our client wanted a Mk X that he could drive regularly. Although this one had undergone a cosmetic restoration and had chassis problems, it was complete with original fittings," says Spowers. The bulk of the £90,000 represents labour charges

including 750 hours of restructuring, carried out by Allen Corcoran, a cheerful Australian with a passion for welding. "The quality of the original restoration work wasn't bad, but a lot of rust had been covered up with mastic. Plates had been welded in with lap joints which allow condensation. I've welded everything with joints butting up against the original, allowing no room for condensation and painted inside the main box sections to seal the seams," he says.

The Prowess team work on two or three cars at a time in a small workshop tucked away in the leafy bit of Surrey. "We've spent £17,000 working on the engine of this car. We can make minor parts ourselves and if we need anything bigger there are a lot of small engineering places with spare capacity. Only things like major electrical work need a contractor," says Spowers.

The way we've restored this car it will last another 20 years without major work and probably hold its value. You could buy a new Mercedes for the same price, but think of the depreciation."

Tom Merrin hears the story of a Panhard et Lavassor with a unique history

The family runabout for 96 years

Edward Jarvis, bicycle maker to the gentry, was impressed by the car driven by one of his customers who arrived at his shop in 1899. The customer was Charles Rolls, later to be the partner of Henry Royce: the car was a Panhard et Lavassor.

So Jarvis bought one for £750 (the equivalent of £135,000 today) — and started a story that is probably unique in the history of motoring. Nearly a century later, the black, red and gold car is still running — and is still in the same family.

As its equipment does not include a millimeter, it is impossible to say how far the Victorian wagonette has travelled, but it is now kept in Colin Gibbins's garage — and still makes the occasional run out, although it can show the temperaments of old age.

The family connection runs directly from the first Edward Jarvis to his son, another Edward, then on to his son, John, who married Mary, Colin Gibbins's sister. Colin

has three sons waiting to carry on the line into a second century.

Buffing up the brasswork on the gleaming vehicle, retired engineer Colin filled in the details of the story.

Panhard and his partner, Lavassor, had been in business for about two or three years when Edward Jarvis first saw her at his business in London's Edgware Road.

"She obviously impressed the old man, because he ordered one from France. All he got was the chassis, axles, wheels and engine, so that part of the car is French. The

rest was made in by a coachworks in Reading."

From 1899, Jarvis drove the car around London, and once took it on what was then a highly adventurous 24-hour marathon. On his death, it passed to Edward junior, but he never shared his father's enthusiasm and hardly drove it. It was laid up, moving parts well greased, solid rubber tyres removed, and for 23 years stayed, unused, in a garage.

By the time it came back on the road, it was a 30-year-old veteran and two years later Edward drove it in its first

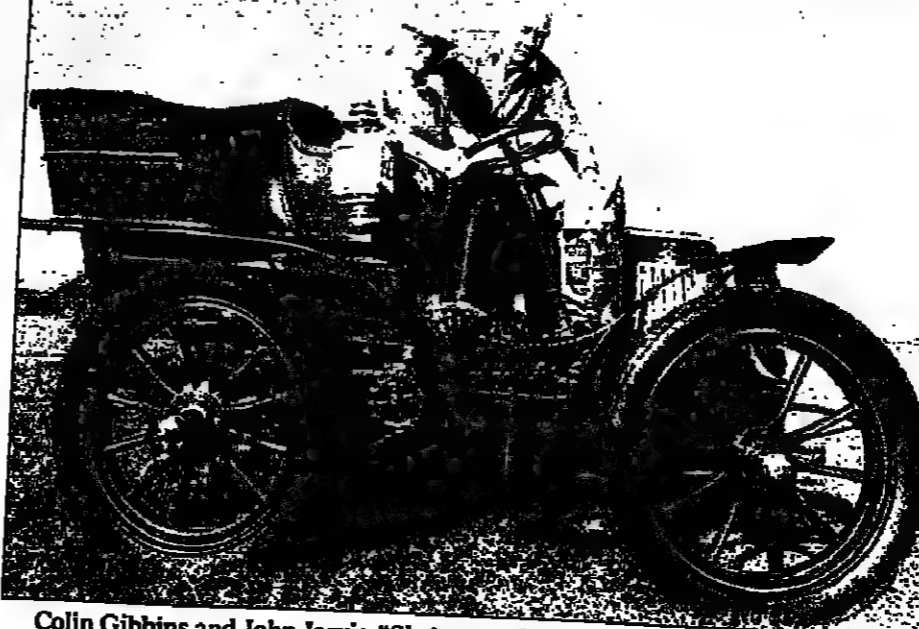
London to Brighton run. Since then, it has taken part in more than 25 of the famous rallies.

In 1938, Edward junior gave the car to his son, John, and for more than half a century John and his wife, Enid, took it on veteran rallies and family outings.

"Despite its age, we regularly went for drives in it," Enid recalled. "In the early days, most people didn't have cars and it was quite an event to go for a spin."

The fame of the car grew in proportion to its age and one of the highspots of its long life was when it appeared in the 1953 film *Genevieve*.

John Jarvis, now 84, gave up driving and maintaining the car three years ago and handed it over to his brother-in-law, Colin, 70, who carries on the family tradition of caring for it in a garage shared with three vintage Rolls-Royces at his home in West Wittering, Sussex. John lives just 50 yards away in the quiet seaside close and makes regular visits to it and to be taken for drives. "John and Mary have no



Colin Gibbins and John Jarvis: "She's part of the family... and the oldest part"

children, and when he passed the car on to me it meant it was staying in the family," said Colin. "I can't see it ever leaving us now. I have three sons — all of them in their forties — and they're all in love with it."

"Everything about this old lady is original. She has wooden wheels and the body is all wood as well. The insurance cover limits me to driving only 500 miles a year, so the tyres are good for a while yet and I have a spare set."

The eight-horsepower engine drives two hefty chains which turn the rear wheels and, flat out, the old car can touch 36mph, three times the speed limit when it was built. "She has four forward and four reverse gears, but the

only instrument on her is a water pressure gauge," said Colin. "It's no good even guessing how far she has travelled in nearly 100 years. There's no mileometer, so we'll never know."

"But what we do know is that she is one of the 20 or so oldest cars in the world that are still running."

There is no accurate valuation on the car, but Colin estimates that it is worth at least £100,000, and her rare numberplate — H 786 — would fetch a small fortune at auction.

"But there's no chance she would ever be sold," he added. "She's part of the family... and the oldest part."

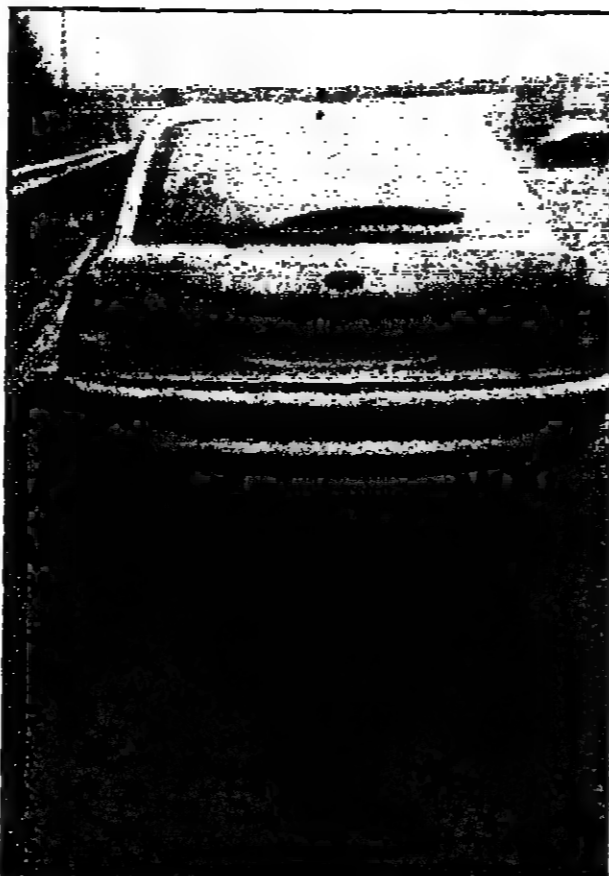
And, like a very elderly maiden aunt, the old car has its own quirks. When Colin and his wife, Mary, struggled with a heavy starting handle and timing gear to start the engine for a run round the block, she simply refused to perform.

"She's having one of her off days," Colin explained. "But at her age you obviously can't expect perfect behaviour all the time."

Despite coming to a shattering halt on the M1, Kevin Eason is waving the flag for the new Ford Escort



Ford's unexpected winner: I know all that talk about the Escort being boring, mass-produced old rubbish, but it is a terrifically well-packaged town car

ESCORT
1.6L CTX

Price: £12,570

Engine: 1.6-litre, double overhead camshaft, 16-valve delivering 90PS at 5,500rpm. Front-wheel-drive through continuously variable belt-driven stepless transmission. Low gear included for traction in wet or snow.

Performance: From 0-60mph in 14 seconds, top speed 108mph. Fuel consumption 47.1 mpg at 75mph, 37.7mpg at 75mph constant and 25.7mpg in simulated mixed town and motorway driving.

Equipment: Full anti-theft package, including lockable fuel filler flap, alarm and engine immobiliser, remote tailgate release and driver's airbag are all standard.

Insurance group: 3.

CVT — GETTING BETTER

Engineers at Ford will next week strip their troublesome CVT gearbox to find out what went wrong. But within minutes of arriving at their garage in Brentford, west London, they were already speculating that the internal belt had snapped, writes Kevin Eason.

Conventional automatics work, in effect, by eliminating the clutch, automatically reading the car's speed and changing up and down for the driver. But automatics can be slow to "kick down" when overtaking, tend to be more fuel-thirsty than manuals and slower to accelerate.

Engineers claim that the new generation of continuous variable transmissions have overcome those faults. Most people remember CVT technology from the long-gone Daf Variomatic, which was ponderous in the extreme: a push on the throttle pedal met only with a rush of engine revs while the gearbox steered itself for action. That was because the CVT system works through a series of pulleys and a drive belt which remains the same length whatever the power, so that engine torque — or pulling power — remains constant. A push on the throttle releases revs, tightening the belt to deliver more power.

The principle remains about the same today, although the technology has been radically altered so that response to the throttle is now immediate. Engine noise does not get louder either, because there is no downshift from the gearbox, the only difference in sounds being a high-pitched, though not intrusive whine.

Ford is not the only company on the CVT bandwagon; Rover's only automatic in its new 200 range is CVT, and excellent it is too. Rover claims its 200 CVT will run at 70mph at just 2,700rpm — slightly below the Escort — while economy figures are virtually the same as for a five-speed manual. There is also no loss of performance, with 0-60mph coming in 9.3 seconds (9.3 for the 1.6 manual), while top speed is 115mph (118mph).

The problem will be reassuring drivers that something new is good. Early CVT cars certainly seem to have suffered reliability problems and are perhaps best avoided on the used car forecourt.

But more recent models feel sharper and should be more responsive, putting drivers at ease with a package so radically different. In any event, look for signs of the car creeping forward too quickly from rest without the throttle and listen for any unpleasant "thunks" when the gearbox is engaged from neutral.

Total failure, complete success

Kiri Te Kanawa and I were battling our way through *Tosca* when we were rudely interrupted by a loud bang certainly not in Puccini's score. Confirmation that my hearing was not being assaulted by an errant bass drummer came when my Ford Escort almost stood on its nose and the engine revved at such a rate that the racket drowned out a full orchestra at top volume.

Mild surprise turned into full-blown panic when I realised the Escort had lost all forward momentum, the automatic gearbox had clearly shattered and the inner workings of the car were dismantling themselves at speed in the outside lane of the M1.

There was a large Volvo breathing down my tailpipe and two cars on my inside as the Escort slowed from 70mph to walking speed in a few seconds. Fortunately, the

plume of smoke from under the car must have alerted them to the fact that I was struggling and they weaved out of the way so that I could guide the car to the hard shoulder.

There I surveyed the trail of oil into the distance while the Escort stood forlorn, with a quiet hiss depositing the rest of its gearbox oil gently on the tarmac in a purple puddle.

At Scratchwood Services — as the car was lifted on to a trailer to be returned to Ford — I called Bob Wright, the company's man in charge of the press car fleet. I think the blood drained from his face when I told him what had happened, for a shattered car with just 3,000 miles on the clock is not the best advertisement for Ford's new prototype.

Yet the blow-up seemed such a shame because, up to that point, I was pretty impressed with the Escort with its continuous variable trans-

mission, known as CVT or CTX to Ford, that had so conspicuously let me down.

Ford is among a series of manufacturers pushing CVT transmissions as the latest gizmo of the future: an automatic gearbox with no steps up and down, just a continuous band of power. Trouble was that my gearbox ended up being all bang and no whizz.

For two days however, I was mightily impressed, so much so, dear Reader, that I want you to put down that teacup and take a few minutes to put all thoughts from your mind, forget your preconceptions and relax, for I am going to tell you something you probably would not expect: the Ford Escort is a good car.

Yes, I know all that talk in the magazines about the Escort being boring, mass-produced old rubbish and yes, there was that bit earlier in this account about the gearbox going up in a puff of smoke. Hardly encouraging, I admit. But honestly, the Escort has a lot going for it, and if that CVT gearbox really is reliable — and my experience is then it is a terrifically well-packaged town car.

It may have the best interior in its segment

After being Britain's top-selling model for a decade, the Escort was revamped to a chorus of yawns from the critics, so dreary were its driving characteristics, so lacklustre its looks.

The car always sells well because Ford has the muscle to discount it into company

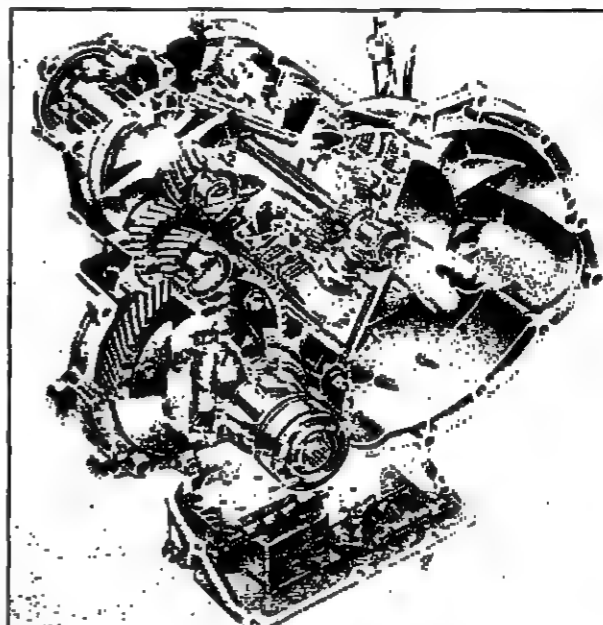
fleets and hire businesses. But private buyers would probably be surprised by the car in its latest incarnation. It looks bright enough, if not outstanding, but probably has the best interior in its segment; the switchgear and overall feel of the cabin welcoming and comfortable.

Then there are the bits and pieces that separate Escort from the rest of the pack, such as the classy stereo, which I was enjoying — I'm not sure about Kiri — at the time of my gearbox crisis, and comprehensive anti-theft and security package. Ride and handling have also been improved hugely from the dull as dish-water response and stodgy suspension of the past. Escort is still not class leader in that department, but for the type and length of driving done by most motorists in this country who do not, on the whole, aspire to be the next Damon

Hill, its abilities are plenty good enough.

But that CVT provides plenty of fascination, particularly for motorists who do most of their driving around town. You simply push the gearstick into Drive and off you go. Although Ford figures show the automatic to be a bit slower off the mark than the manual 1.6-litre (14 seconds to 60mph compared with 11.6), there is no feeling of lag in acceleration, just a smooth takeoff. It takes only a few hours to get over the idea that there should be the customary jerk of changing gears from the transmission, although it seemed to me like blessed release from the curse of the clutch.

However, there is apparently only one other trick to full enjoyment of the Escort's continuous variable transmission — and that is to keep it going continuously.



Ford's CVT gearbox: a long way from the Daf Variomatic

Employees who wreck the company finances

Memo to fleet manager: Here's a way to save a fortune by teaching our people to drive

YOU ARE in your office, idly looking out at the car park full of shiny cars all belonging to employees. Along comes a vandal clutching a baseball bat and, without a second thought, he's smashing windows, headlamps and panels, writes Kevin Eason.

It's an horrific prospect, yet thousands of cars are damaged that recklessly in company fleets — wrecked by employees too incompetent at the wheel or too cavalier to care what it costs.

That is why we are launching *The Times-Lease Plan Company Car Driver of the Year Competition*, our quest for the best men and women who drive vehicles that belong to businesses, hospitals, surgeries, fire services — anyone who spends all or part of their working day at the wheel.

The six regional finals are not only a serious test of skill, comprising judgment examinations, questions on the Highway Code and a session at the wheel of a new Nissan Almera 1.6 on the road, they are also fun for drivers who want to improve.

The best go to the final at Silverstone, where the Silverstone Driving Centre — the school run by former Formula One ace, John Watson — will put competitors through a series of high-speed challenges. And there is the bonus of a terrific prize for the eventual winner: the competition in the form of a touring holiday for two in Europe, in a car provided by Lease Plan.

Lease Plan, one of Europe's leading leasing companies, decided to sponsor the competition for the third year



Vahid Daemi: "Very few firms take the subject seriously"

because its executives see the appalling damage reckless driving does to company finances, without even taking into account the despair and hurt of injuries and death.

The irony is that no company would set any employee to work on a lathe or press without giving them adequate training and setting safeguards in place. Yet they

happily give their employees machines costing anywhere between £9,000 and £90,000 not knowing if they will return in one piece. Nobody tests their competence at the wheel.

"I fear that many companies still regard driver training as an expense as opposed to an investment," says Vahid Daemi, Lease Plan's managing director. "Yet nothing

could be further from the truth, as the more far-sighted companies are discovering."

The evidence comes from a Lease Plan study, which found that 42 per cent of accidents reported to fleet managers last year were classed as "avoidable". In other words, the driver was careless or inattentive. The cost of those accidents is huge: Lease Plan says that repairs averaged £683 per car last year, compared with £633 the year before.

COUPLED with the rising cost of claims, that should be setting fleet managers thinking hard. In no other area of company spending would costs be allowed to be so uncontrolled.

Daemi says: "The figures are compelling, but when we asked how many companies actually carry out driver training of any kind we were stunned by the results. Very few seem to take the subject seriously at all."

In fact, only 44 per cent of big companies with more than 5,000 employees have offered training, and even among those, it has reached only an average 22 per cent of the workforce. The figures plummet the smaller the business: only 19 per cent of companies with 1,000 to 5,000 employees offer training, 10 per cent of those with 50 to 250 people and 4 per cent of businesses with fewer than 50 people.

"There is a direct impact on costs here which companies are not tackling and which they could easily do something towards," adds Daemi. "But more than that, training leads to more skilful drivers who take pride in their motoring and enjoy their time at the wheel, testing themselves and their abilities against what they have been taught."

"Our experience is that Company Car Driver of the Year is a lot of fun. It also means that there are a lot of drivers who entered the competition, improved their standards — and improved their chances of bringing the company car back in one piece."

ENTRY FORM

ABOUT YOUR COMPANY...

Company name:

Address: Post code:

Tel number: Fax number:

Nature of business:

Number of employees: Number of company cars:

Entrant: Position:

NOTE: Entrant should be the director/manager responsible for the company's car fleet

NOMINATED DRIVERS...

Surname	Forename	Job title	Age	Points on licence (last 3)
1				
2				
3				
4 (reserve)				

Please select your first and second choice location/date of regional heat (indicate 1 or 2 in box):

Maidstone, Kent	Friday, 3 May	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oxford	Friday, 10 May	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wigan, Lancs	Friday, 17 May	<input type="checkbox"/>	Elstree, Herts	Friday, 24 May	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stourport, Hereford	Friday, 31 May	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester	Friday, 7 June	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please ensure that entrant and nominated drivers are available for both first and second choice dates and for Silverstone on Friday, 21 June. Initial qualification may be by telephone questionnaire. Entrants and drivers will be contacted on an individual basis.

Once you have completed this entry form
fax to Lease Plan on 01753 620676

Competition rules

The closing date for entries is 17 April 1996. Drivers must be 24 years of age or over. Maximum number of entrants on any company's driving licence is three points. Drivers must bring their own driving licence to their regional heat for confirmation of the above. Drivers must be recommended by the director or senior manager responsible for the company's car fleet. Drivers must be nominated in groups of three. Companies can only enter one team to compete. The entrant may nominate his/her own team. The entrant must drive a company car or vehicle as part of their employment or remuneration package. Qualification for the national final will be dependent on a written test, to be completed by the entrant at their team's regional heat. Employees of Lease Plan, DriveTech, Nissan, News International and the Wildlife Group are not permitted to enter. In the event of over-subscription, qualification to the regional heats will be judged through a random driver telephone questionnaire. If the entrant does not qualify for the regional heat, the entrant will be informed in writing prior to the final heat and the team will be placed on a reserve list. Feedback on each driver's performance will be available after the competition. The entrant driver will be called upon at the regional heat should one of the first three drivers be unable to compete. In the event of a driver not being able to attend, the next highest scoring driver from the regional heat will be invited to attend in their place. The prize for the winner will be a seven day European touring holiday for two. The entrant's prize will be a driver's licence for one year. Cash alternatives are not available. The judge's decision is final.

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1. **Introduction**

Win

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1. *Chlorophyll a* and *Chlorophyll b* were determined by the method of Arar and Collins (1971) using a Shimadzu 1010 spectrophotometer. The concentration of chlorophylls was expressed as $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ of the sample.

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl a) and *Chlorophyll b* (Chl b) are the two main photosynthetic pigments in green plants. They are responsible for capturing light energy and converting it into chemical energy through the process of photosynthesis. Chl a is the primary pigment, while Chl b acts as an accessory pigment, transferring energy to Chl a.

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Win £10,000 playing F1 Fantasy Drive

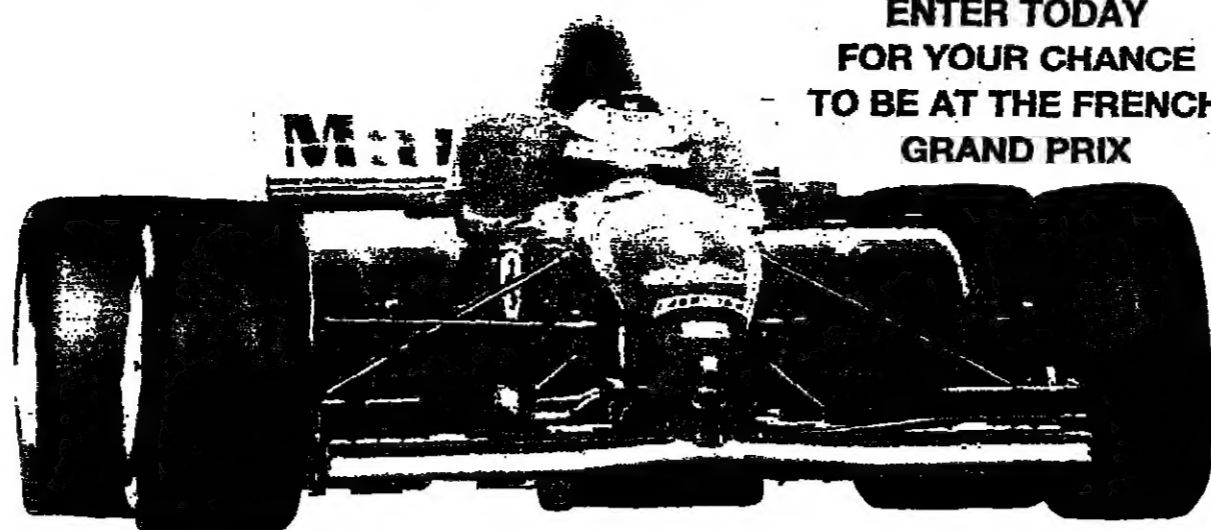


Fancy yourself as an expert on formula one racing? Do you think you can predict the result of this year's grand prix series? Then why not play our exciting new F1 Fantasy Drive competition. Listed below, right, are eight groups of drivers racing in the 1996 Formula One season. Study the groups and enter a F1 Fantasy Drive team to compete in the 15 grands prix taking place between March 31 and the end of the season for our £10,000 jackpot prize. You can enter at any time between now and noon on Thursday March 28 by selecting a total of eight drivers — one from each of the eight groups, A to H, listed right.

Once you have chosen your team fill out the coupon, far right, making a careful note of the two-digit code printed in bold for each of your selections. Please keep this coupon safe, you will need it as a record of your entry. Next ring our 24-hour entry line on 0891 40 50 32 (0044 990 100 332 in the Republic of Ireland). Calls last approximately five minutes. You will need a touchtone telephone to enter (most telephones with * and # keys are touchtone).

Follow the instructions on the entry line. You will be asked to nominate your eight (two-digit) selections in turn. You will then be asked to give your F1 Fantasy Drive team name together with your own name, address, postcode and daytime telephone number. You will receive a 10-digit PIN number as a confirmation of your entry. Please keep a record of this with your team details.

Our points-scoring system starts with the Brazilian



ENTER TODAY
FOR YOUR CHANCE
TO BE AT THE FRENCH
GRAND PRIX

Grand Prix at Interlagos on March 31 and details of a transfer system will be announced in due course, allowing you to change up to four members of your team to increase your chances of winning.

WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO THE FRENCH GP
Enter a F1 Fantasy Drive team today and you could win a trip for two to the French Grand Prix at Magny-Cours on June 30. All entries received by noon on March 28 will enter the prize draw. The winner will be selected at random.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

- 1) Qualifying points: scored by drivers qualifying for the start of each grand prix within the first 20 positions on the grid. Pole position 20 points; 2nd 18; 3rd 16; 4th 14; 5th 12; 6th 10; 7th 8; 8th 6; 9th 4; 10th 3; 11th 2; 12th 1; 13th 0.5; 14th 0.5; 15th 0.5; 16th 0.5; 17th 0.5; 18th 0.5; 19th 0.5; 20th 0.5.
- 2) Finishing points: (as for qualifying points) scored by drivers for the top 20 positions at the end of every grand prix: 1st position 20 points; and in descending order to one point for 20th position.
- 3) Lap points: one point is scored for each lap completed in a grand prix.
- 4) Improved position points: three points are scored for each place improved from starting grid to finishing position in each race.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 1 Race results will be taken as those standing at midnight on the Sunday of each grand prix.
- 2 The rules of the FIA, as they affect the Times F1 Fantasy Drive, will apply in relation to points.
- 3 Changes of circumstance: If a driver is replaced, through death or injury, you will be deemed to have chosen the new driver; if a driver transfers to another team you will keep that driver as your selection. In both instances the driver is eligible for transfer should you wish to exercise this option.
- 4 In the event of one or more entrants having the same score at the end of the competition a tie break will come into effect to decide the £10,000 prize winner.
- 5 In the event of more than one entrant having the same score for an individual race prize the winner will be selected at random.
- 6 The computerised record of your entry will be considered to be the entry.
- 7 Normal Times Newspapers rules apply and the editor's decision is final.

THE PRIZES

JACKPOT The player with the top F1 Fantasy Drive team after the Japanese Grand Prix on October 13, 1996, wins £10,000.

GRAND PRIX WINNERS Prizes will be awarded to players whose F1 Fantasy Drive team scores the most points at each grand prix from March 31 to October 13, 1996. Prizes include a pair of VIP tickets to the British grand prix at Silverstone on July 14 for the winners of the Brazilian and Argentinian races.

Win VIP tickets to the British Grand Prix

THE WINNER of our Brazilian Grand Prix game on March 31 will win VIP hospitality for two, as guests of Jonathan Palmer, at the exciting British Grand Prix on Sunday, July 14 at Silverstone. Each place is worth £450 plus VAT.

The winner and a partner will meet the former F1 driver and BBC commentator in the luxurious surroundings of a new pavilion right beside Hangar Straight, the fastest part of the Silverstone circuit.

Johnny Herbert, last year's British Grand Prix winner, will also be a special guest.

Damon Hill's 1995 Formula 1 Williams will be present for guests to see at close quarters, complete with all the equipment to enable a pit stop to be performed. Following training from an F1 mechanic you will perform your own pit stop in teams, with prizes for the fastest.

All day catering includes a superb four-course lunch,

with free wine and traditional afternoon tea. A complimentary bar is available throughout the day and you will be able to watch the race at the track, or on one of the cinema-style screens.

Besides Formula One, there is the exhilarating British Touring Cars, air displays by the Red Arrows and the Red Devils Parachute display. And when there is no racing there are parades of great cars and drivers.



MAKE ONE SELECTION FROM EACH OF THESE EIGHT GROUPS

GROUP A	GROUP C	GROUP E	GROUP G
01 M Schumacher	07 D Coulthard	13 M Sato	19 T Inoue
02 J Alesi	08 M Hakkinen	14 P Larri	20 R Rosset
03 D Hill	09 H H. Frantzen	15 P Diniz	
GROUP B	GROUP D	GROUP F	GROUP H
04 G Berger	10 M Brundle	16 U. Katsuyama	21 L Badoer
05 E Irvine	11 R Barrichello	17 J Verstappen	22 A Montanari
06 J Villeneuve	12 J Herbert	18 O Pons	

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My F1 Fantasy Drive Team

Team name _____

Code Drivers

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

H _____

Personal identity number (Pin): _____

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4800, 4900, 5000, 5100,

5200, 5300, 5400, 5500,

5600, 5700, 5800, 5900,

6000, 6100, 6200, 6300,

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6800, 6900, 7000, 7100,

7200, 7300, 7400, 7500,

7600, 7700, 7800, 7900,

8000, 8100, 8200, 8300,

8400, 8500, 8600, 8700,

8800, 8900, 9000, 9100,

9200, 9300, 9400, 9500,

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10000, 10100, 10200, 10300,

10400, 10500, 10600, 10700,

10800, 10900, 11000, 11100,

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11600, 11700, 11800, 11900,

12000, 12100, 12200, 12300,

12400, 12500, 12600, 12700,

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20000, 20100, 20200, 20300,

20400, 20500, 20600, 20700,

20800, 20900, 21000, 21100,

Stuart Birch ponders the identity of BMW's new 3-series

Is it a saloon? Is it an estate? No, it's a Touring

Yes, when I'm not in a rush. I hate it

I filed a football match report for a station, which will be nameless — Lincoln City — from the car purporting to still be at the ground. I had the radio on in the background for sound effects. Fortunately, the team was Boston United, so I did not have to produce an Old Trafford-style roar.

John Inverdale and his "characterless" but practical for London" Astra

The VW one where the guy drives off the top of a building. It makes me feel sick, even though the VW Golf was the best car I ever had.

The new Oasis album. Non-stop. Prior

The problem with a car like the BMW 3-series Touring is that it could be seen as a compromise, unable to satisfy

Insurance group: 13.
Equipment: ABS, central locking with deadlock, electronic immobiliser, driver's airbag, electric windows, mirrors and sunroof, retractable luggage cover.

Leaving aside this business of what is or is not in a name, what I can say is that the Touring has all the dynamic delights found in almost every BMW model. Driving it is always a pleasure, never a chore. There is a choice of petrol engines from 1.8 to 2.8 litres, plus a couple of diesels. I tried the 2.0 litre, 24-valve 6-cylinder which is a real smoothie; remarkably flexible and gives the car good performance and fine economy potential of around 30 mpg. The five-speed manual gearbox is one of the best in the business for change quality, but a five-speed automatic is an option at £1,120.

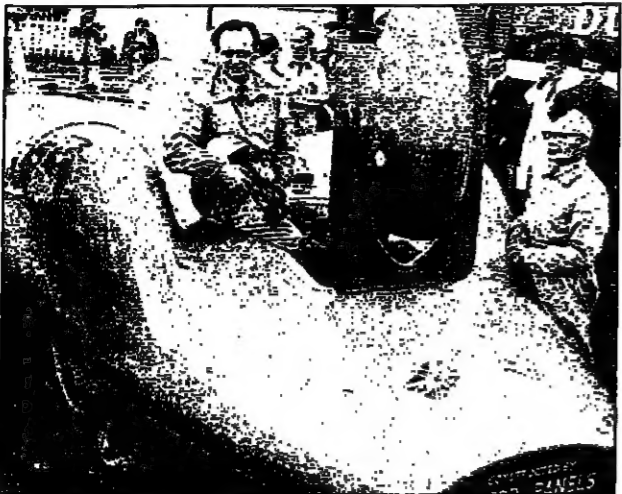
Equipment levels on BMWs are now better than they used to be, but a radio is still an extra-cost item on the 320i Touring, as is a passenger airbag.

Price: £22,340.
Engines: Six-cylinder, 24-valve, 1991 cc, 150 bhp driving rear wheels.
Five-speed manual transmission.
Performance: 0-60 mph, 10 seconds, top speed 132mph, 31mpg.
Insurance group: 13.
Equipment: ABS, central locking with deadlock, electronic immobiliser, driver's airbag, electric windows, mirrors and sunroof, retractable luggage cover.

[illegible]

A Campbell is coming again to claim another record. David Long reports

Assault on a battery speed challenge



Record-breaker extraordinary: Donald Campbell, who raised the land speed record to 400mph-plus, with Bluebird in 1962

A new all-British attempt on the world land speed record is set to reunite three famous and historic names — Bluebird, Campbell and Pendine Sands. The Sussex-based team is aiming to smash the record for battery-powered vehicles by raising it to more than 200mph. The record-breaker will use new technology which, according to its British backers, could revolutionise public acceptance of electric cars as a viable alternative.

The driver is to be London-based photographer Don Wales-Campbell, the latest in a line of speed-obsessed Campbells who over three generations have between them broken nearly two dozen land and water speed records. Don's attempt will take place in early 1997, more than 70 years after his grandfather, Captain (later Sir) Malcolm Campbell, was first credited with a new land speed record.

The occasion will also mark the 30th anniversary of the death of Don's uncle, also called Donald, who died while attempting to set a new world water speed record.

When he first broke the record, Malcolm Campbell was driving a huge 350-horsepower V12-engined Sunbeam and he subsequently became famous for a whole series of record breakers, each of which

he christened Bluebird. In all Sir Malcolm broke the land speed record nine times (by 1935 he had taken it to more than 300mph) and the water speed record another four. Campbell senior was succeeded on both land and water by his son Donald, who raised the land speed record to more than 400mph and captured the water speed record an incredible seven times. In 1967, while attempting to beat the latter once more, he was catapulted to his death in the Lake District. Yet another waterborne Campbell, Gina, later went on to set a new women's record.

Now Gina's cousin, Don Wales-Campbell, is preparing to wheel out the very latest in this long line of Bluebirds and to use it to win another outright speed record for the famous family. His vehicle is a slim, elegant wind-cheater that uses four liquid-cooled electric drives or pancake motors instead of cylinders, sparks and pistons.

There is nothing new about using battery power to break speed records, and in the pioneering days of motoring the first record attempts all used electricity. In fact the early internal combustion engines barely got a look-in and until 1902 the world land speed record was held and broken by a succession of electric cars. The most famous was Camille



Back to Pendine Sands: designer Nelson Kruschandl, left, and Don Wales-Campbell

Jenatzy's cigar-shaped Jamais Contente, which managed a creditable 65.79mph. Even when the electric contenders were officially declared beaten, the car which finally managed to oust them was a French Serpollet powered not by petrol but by steam.

Nearly a century later, the British record for electric vehicles is still only 110mph, the world record less than 190mph. The team is confident that the new Bluebird will exceed both and it could, they say, even reach 250mph. That may look somewhat modest alongside Richard Noble's supersonic Thrust SSC project, but it offers them the opportunity to bring yet another famous name into the frame.

Precisely because the existing record for electric vehicles is comparatively low, the attempt can take place here in Britain. Noble and his team have had to decamp to the salt lakes of North America — nowhere else can provide the necessary huge stretches of

smooth, flat terrain essential for 750mph-plus motoring — but the Bluebird team are instead making tracks for one of the most romantic locations in early British motoring history, Pendine Sands on the Welsh coast near Carmarthen.

Don and the car's creator, Nelson Kruschandl, are particularly pleased to have been granted permission to use Pendine Sands because it was here that the Sunbeam driven by Don's grandfather first entered the record books at 150.87mph. It was also on Pendine Sands that one of Britain's most famous early record breakers, the Higham Special affectionately known as Babs, raced in the 1920s.

With a sophisticated aluminium centre section and a lightweight composite body, the new Bluebird is strikingly different from these mammoth pre-war record-breakers. As well as its featherweight construction and excellent aerodynamics, it uses innovative energy-transfer technology developed by Kruschandl's company, Refuella Electric Vehicles, to drive all four wheels.

His partner in REV, John Gould, is a former racing driver and something of a Campbell enthusiast. On his office wall he has the actual china Bluebirds that once graced the wall in Sir Malcolm's own study, so it is perhaps no coincidence that REV's patented system, called Wolverine refuelling, has been made available to the Bluebird team specifically for the record attempt.

Kruschandl is confident, however, that his system has more far-reaching and practical applications than merely breaking records. He has already obtained financial backing from a major UK electricity supplier to develop his road-going version which, he believes, will offer the sort of range and performance re-

DR DASHBOARD

Sorry, we can't all go electric

Q Will the new Bluebird bring electric cars any closer for the rest of us?

A There are two big problems with electric vehicles: the weight of the batteries and their limited range.

Q But if an electric car can travel at 200mph, surely manufacturers can solve problems like that?

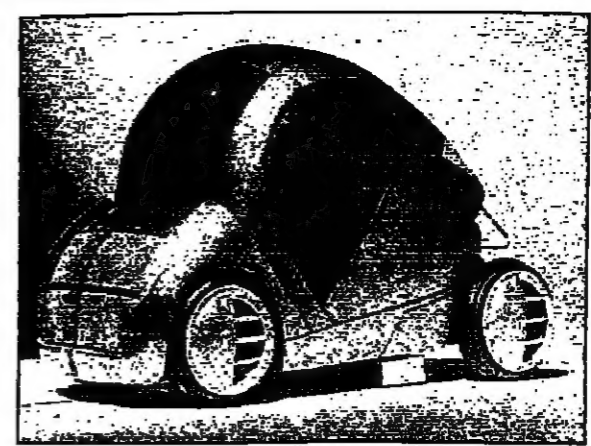
A Designing a car for record-breaking wipes out one of those problems straight away. It means it only needs a range of a few miles.

Q But we've known about those problems for years. Why doesn't the Government encourage people to come up with a solution?

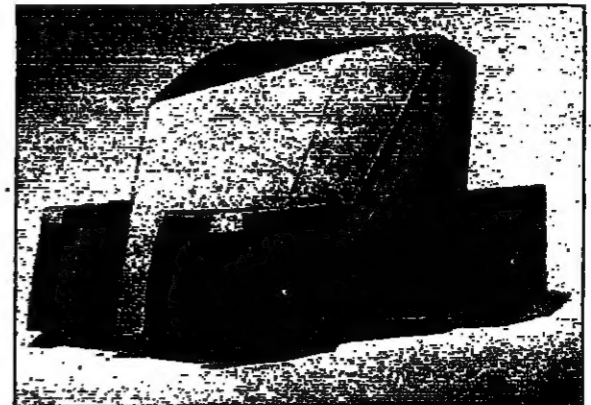
A That's a good question in this country. In France the government offers a £2,000 subsidy to purchasers of electric vehicles and in the US they can get income tax credits worth up to £2,700. The only incentive here is Westminster council's offer of a free parking place.

Q So who has made the greatest progress towards producing a proper electric car?

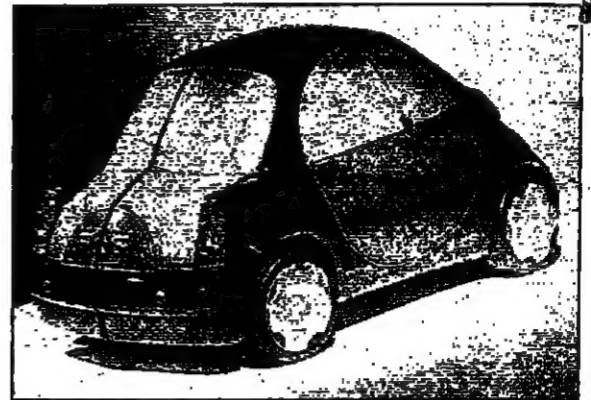
A Mercedes is working hard on the problem, so is General Motors. In France Peugeot/Citroën has been testing the Tulip, a plug-in electric car with a range of 50-60 miles and a speed of 45mph.



Tomorrow's Citroën: bubble-like by Xitij Mistry...



...coming to a certain point by Bertrand Bach...



...and Noddy-influenced from Chang Hyup Back

Shaping up to the future of how Citroën will look

IS IT A bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a loaf of bread... or something. When design students are given their heads and told to draw the shapes of cars for the next century, they obviously throw out convention.

What they replace it with is a matter of conjecture, looking at designs entered by students from the Royal College of Art. Kevin Eason writes. They were asked by Citroën to produce "an imaginative and radical interpretation of the Citroën identity in the year 2010, portraying elements of French cultural values as well as an historical appreciation of the marque".

The RCA is probably the top breeding ground for car designers anywhere in the world — but what emerged from the styling exercise would have left most ordinary car buyers slightly more than baffled.

This was clearly car

sculpture for the mantlepiece rather than designs for a model in which I would go to the shops. One looked like an upright loaf with eggshell corners, another like a snail on wheels.

The cynic could pick where these designs fit into the daily grind of motoring around crowded streets, with the kids screaming in the back and the Sainsbury's carrier bags tipping over, depositing their contents all over the boot. Come to think of it, the experts could ask that too.

But the students had their reasoning: George Saridakis, 24, from Edinburgh, says of his entry that its forms "reflect the discordant and contrasting nature of French culture, embodying surfaces and implication of volumes to create a personal interpretation of the Citroën spirit". D'accord.

MAZDA 3

(mazda) > (the rest)

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